THE HANDICAP

ROBERT·E·KNOWLES

MISSION THRIFT STORE
Mission Thrift Store
Books
Vintage
SOLD AS IS
02500103085580100040O
12-24
$4.00

M. R. Wright.

THE HANDICAP

By Robert E. Knowles

The Handicap

The Attic Guest

A Story of the South and North

The Web of Time

A Romance of the Human Heart

The Undertow

A Tale of Both Sides of the Sea

St. Cuthbert's

A Parish Romance

The Dawn at Shanty Bay

Decorated and Illustrated by
Griselda M. McClure

THE HANDICAP

A NOVEL OF PIONEER DAYS

By
ROBERT E. KNOWLES
Author of "St. Cuthbert's," "The Attic Guest," etc., etc.

New York Chicago Toronto
Fleming H. Revell Company
London and Edinburgh

Copyright, 1910, by
FLEMING H. REVELL COMPANY

New York: 158 Fifth Avenue
Chicago: 80 Wabash Avenue
Toronto: 25 Richmond Street, W.
London: 21 Paternoster Square
Edinburgh: 100 Princes Street

CONTENTS

I.	The Home-Seekers	9
II.	Dinny's Treat	25
III.	An Irish Heart Makes Bold	44
IV.	The Fight Among the Pines	60
V.	The Victory of Surrender	81
VI.	"Kings May be Blest, But ——"	95
VII.	The Compassion of the Pure	116
VIII.	The "Churching" of Margaret Menzies	125
IX.	The Debate Across the Bar	136
X.	A Face in Memory's Hall	164
XI.	The Chase—By the Cedar Creek	180
XII.	Mr. Hilliard Convalescent—and Communicative	198
XIII.	How Dinny Coached the Orator	214
XIV.	Music Hath Charms—Sometimes	226
XV.	An Elder Unordained	235
XVI.	A Gallant Knight, Sir Arthur!	247
XVII.	"Not Accepting Deliverance"	261
XVIII.	Dinny the Diplomat	268
XIX.	"The Injudeecious Use"	275
XX.	Dinny the Debater	290
XXI.	When a Woman Pleads	299
XXII.	When the Devil Drives	307
XXIII.	The Bitter Fruit of Victory	323
XXIV.	An Heir by Honour Bound	331
XXV.	The Right Hon., the Premier	344
XXVI.	Sir John A.'s Handiwork	362
XXVII.	"And the Shadows Flee Away"	378

THE HANDICAP

I

THE HOME-SEEKERS

"AN' how far might it be to Liddel's Corners now, boss?"

The man who asked the question seemed very much in earnest about it and his tone, which, by the way, was distinctly Irish, implied that considerable hung upon the answer.

As one sets down the commonplace inquiry after the long lapse of years it certainly sounds insignificant enough. But it was quite a different matter to the rosy-cheeked traveller that frosty winter morning as the heavily-laden stage made its creaking way along the primitive road that led from Hamilton to Glen Ridge.

Nor did the question seem a trifling one to the other occupants of the four-seated sleigh, if quick and eager glances in the direction of the driver may be considered evidences of interest. As a matter of fact, some of them stirred a little in their seats as

they awaited an answer from the fur-clad figure in the front, the aforesaid figure all engrossed with the duty of the hour as he guided his smoking team, now urging them almost to a gallop when some level stretch invited, now slowing to a walk as some yawning pitch-hole showed before.

The day was cold, as became a Canadian winter; the thermometer, if any of the travellers had had one, would have shown the mercury skulking around zero; there was, too, a gusty little wind from the east, quite too inquisitive for comfort. So it was no wonder that the eager voyagers showed a lively interest in the matter of Liddel's Corners and their proximity thereto.

The driver, however, was in no hurry with his reply. A few of the occupants of the sleigh knew right well that no immediate answer would be given —but these exceptions were residents of Glen Ridge and they knew Judd too well for that. Probably they themselves were quite ignorant of the driver's second name, but they knew Judd—which was the most of him, as it is of nearly all professional Jehus—and they were well aware that he would have to reflect a little before any answer would be given; such reflections to be concerned, indeed, not with the distance to Liddel's Corners or any other spot on this terraqueous globe, but with the fact that he himself

was driver, conductor, cicerone of these immigrants entrusted to his care; and, more important still, that he had been all of these almost ever since newcomers from across the sea had first sought this particular settlement amid Canadian forests.

"An' how far might it be now?—Sure it was farder when I asked ye last," came again from the rubicund one in the hindmost seat of the sleigh. There was a whimsically plaintive note in the voice this time; the Hibernian accent, too, was a little more pronounced. Perhaps this was because he turned as he spoke and smiled down into the face of the little girl beside him, which, uplifted to his own, betrayed a father's features with almost startling faithfulness.

The driver moved a little in his seat, his right hand, encased in a heavy buckskin mitt, rising slowly to remove a massive wooden pipe from a very capacious mouth; being in the neighbourhood thereof, it was also drawn emphatically across the base of a rather dewy nose, thus saving an extra trip to that locality. Then he spoke, but in a tone that indicated he did not have to.

"It's nine miles to the Corners: nine miles—an' a bit," slowly replacing the heavy pipe and gripping it with two rows of yellow teeth in a way that indicated all such irregularities were at an end, for a time at least.

"Nine miles," his inquirer echoed cheerfully, "that's nothin'—sure that's only a mile a piece," a pair of semi-serious, semi-merry eyes numbering the passengers as he spoke.

"But who gets the bit?" came from a muffled form beside him on the seat.

"Yon man," responded the other without a pause, nodding towards a figure in the middle of the sleigh, conspicuous in a tam-o'-shanter and a plaid.

"What makes you think he'll get the extra?" returned the decidedly cultured voice of his companion, pursuing the conversation for want of other employment.

"Sure he's Scotch," retorted the Hibernian; "it's the bits that's made them fellows—that's what's give them the earth an' the fullness thereof. Have ye annything to say agin that, Sandy?" as he leaned a little forward towards the grim figure in the seat before him.

But the Scotchman was in no mood for humour. "Ye're verra gleg wi' the tongue, my freen'," he replied icily, "but if the earth *did* belong to us, d' ye ken the first thing we'd dae wi' pairt o' 't?" As the Scot came nearer the end of his speech he hurried noticeably, for the splendour of his repartee grew upon him as he spoke.

"Sure I don't that," the man behind him admitted cheerfully. "What might it be, now?"

"We'd sink yon wee island ye cam' frae unner the sea—we'd drop ye a' aneath the water for an hour or twa."

"Faith, then, that'd be the first thing yez ever dropped after ye got yer paws on it," was the frank response. "But for Hivin's sake, don't mention watter on a day like this. Watter!" he repeated, shivering, "it's enough to freeze the insides o' ye, talkin' about the likes o' that when we're all sittin' wid our tongues out, waitin' for Liddel's Corners to kape the breath o' life in us. There isn't anny Scotch about *you*, my friend, except that there balloon ye've got on top o' ye—if there was, it's hydryphoby ye'd be havin' at the thoughts o' watter on a day like this—in a furrin country, too, when a man wants something to warm the heart of him. I see that rightly," and the impeachment was concluded with divers emphatic shakes of the head in the direction of the heresy he deplored.

The tam-o'-shanter could be seen nodding once or twice as though the head beneath were agitated with some idea that either could not or would not be expressed—there is deep pathos in the many brilliant things of which Scotchmen are still undelivered before they die—and silence fell again upon the com-

pany. Onward glided the sleigh, leaving behind a track of silvery sheen; bravely plodded the smoking team, the monotonous jingle of their bells resolving itself into a kind of tune; silently the towering oak and pine and maple and elm, sentinels of a thousand years, looked down upon the little squad of travellers whom poverty, or enterprise, or adventure's lure had beguiled from various stations across the sea to the glorious uncertainty of Western wilds. Dark and wondering glances not a few were cast towards these deep and almost pathless woods as the immigrants were borne along the forest avenue; what, they seemed to ask, might not be hidden within those vast and silent caverns?—what, they seemed to fear, can be found therein for the sustenance of man?

Half an hour, or nearly that, must have expired in almost unbroken silence when the little caravan passed slowly over a rudely-constructed bridge, beneath which there flowed a fairly generous stream whose music even the rigour of such a winter had failed to hush. Partly covered with ice, the central current was still unfrozen; and the liquid melody floated upwards, mingling with the tinkling bells. Every weary exile seemed to turn and look, even drowsy eyes greeting it with a look of welcome.

"That's the same, annyway—thank God," came

reverently enough from the son of Erin's Isle. The long silence had been distasteful to him, as it is to most of that cordial race.

"What's the same?" returned the man beside him, without looking around.

"That there little brook—sure it's Irish it's talkin' —when I shut my eyes an' listen, I could think I'm back in dear ould Donegal again. It's the twin sister of a little stream I paddled in when I was a broth of a boy—an' it was niver as dear to me heart as it is this day," and the Celtic voice had a mournful note of reminiscent tenderness.

"Then you're from Ireland?" said his companion.

"I am that—an' Hiven bless the name," was the fervent response.

"Going to Glen Ridge?" ventured the other.

The immigrant nodded, giving an extra pull at the buffalo robe the while, and feeling the hands of the little girl to see if they were cold. "That's where I'm bound for. Tim coaxed me to come. He went to school wid me, did Tim—Tim Loftus. He said as how it wasn't much of a place for a workin' man—but he's sellin' out to me. I'm goin' to take his business—goin' to try, annyway."

"Tim Loftus," the other repeated quietly; "I knew him. I knew Tim well."

The Irishman swung around as eagerly as though he

had discovered an old friend. "Ye don't mean it—well, now, don't that bate all? Timmie was nothin' but a workin' man in Ireland. He hated it too. Tim never liked work—but he liked his pay terrible well, did Timmie," a touch of endearment in the tone. "So wan day he threw his hod to the divil, did Tim—an' he went to Ameriky. He borrowed five pound from my father—my father kept the Black Bull; ye'll mebbe have heard tell o' the Black Bull in Kilkarty?—an' Tim, he thought he'd try the same kind o' business in Ameriky. Might ye live in Glen Rich, when ye're at home, sir?" he suddenly digressed to inquire.

"Glen Ridge," the other corrected quietly—"Ridge, not Rich."

"Och, well, it's the same thing," the Celt responded cheerfully; "callin' a thing rich don't make it rich, begorra, does it now? An' what might ye do in Glen-What-D'ye-Call-It? What might be yer business, I mean?"

The older man smiled as he turned a little to look into the face of his questioner. The noble kindliness of the whole countenance, especially of the large and searching eyes, could hardly have failed to impress a much less discerning mind than that of his Irish fellow traveller.

"I'm a—well," he began a little hesitatingly, "well,

I'm a working man myself. Yes, I'm a kind of a working man."

"Who might ye work for?" the other promptly questioned.

"Oh—well, for several people. Yes, I work for a lot of different folks."

"Indeed," replied his companion, evidently a little mystified; "an' d'ye have long hours, sir?"

"Rather long—yes, decidedly long," and the strong, gentle face, half hidden by an ample muffler, could be seen to smile.

"Ye'll be gettin' high wages, I dare say?"

The answer was a little long in coming. "Well, yes, in a certain sense. Yes, I'm pretty well paid. I don't get much money, it's true—but I consider myself well paid," and the grave eyes looked far on towards the soft fringe of hills beyond which he knew Glen Ridge was nestling in the valley.

A moment later he turned his gaze upon his questioner, curious to observe what impression his somewhat enigmatical speech had made; a glance was enough to assure him that the Irishman was but little concerned with the conversation in which he had borne a part. For his eyes were intent upon something straight ahead of him, and his line of vision was directly between the horses' bended heads. Very intently did he gaze, and an observant

eye might have detected a gathering pity on his face. It was only a moment until both pairs of eyes, then those of one or two others, then of every passenger in the sleigh, were fastened upon what could be seen a few hundred yards ahead.

Two human forms could be descried, and both on foot. The one was a woman's, tall and slender, with that undefinable attractiveness which even distance cannot rob of its mysterious charm; the other was the figure of a child, a boy of tender years, his hand clasped in that of the woman by his side. Each was in one of the beaten paths that formed the highway for such infrequent sleighs as made the journey towards the waiting hamlet which lay somewhere in the distance; a ridge of snow at least two feet high separated the shining tracks, burnished by many a heavy load; and the woman had to lean over a little to retain her hold of the diminutive traveller whose childish legs trudged along as best they could. Her garb, now discernible as the intervening space grew less, seemed sadly inadequate for the season, poor protection against such an unfriendly day. A light alpaca skirt fluttered in the wind, beneath which could be seen such hosiery as befits June rather than January, and fragile shoes enwrapped in the thinnest sheath of rubber, its only advantage being

to prevent her slipping as she walked. Light knitted gloves were on her hands, and a small straw bonnet, still boasting a solitary flower, was all she had upon her head. The "cloud," or muffler, that protected the youngster's ears and face was evidently her own, transferred with womanly unselfishness to the brave lad beside her.

"Will it near be Glen Ridge now, mother?" the little fellow asked as he puffed along, clinging desperately to the outstretched hand and adjusting his words with childish inaccuracy.

"It won't be so very far now," the woman's voice answered, a surge of pity in it; "are you tired, my son?"

"Yes, awful," the child's voice came back, quite a little pause between the words, due to a plaintive little spurt as he trotted a brief yard or so to reassure the heart he somehow felt was heavier than his own.

Silence for a minute. Then "I'm awful hungry too," came in little puffing installments from the youthful pilgrim; "isn't there another cookie, mother?" his face turned a moment towards her as he spoke.

"I'm afraid not, child," and the words seemed to hurt the mother as they came. "You know I told you that last one was the last, didn't I, dear?"

"Yes," the boyish lips pouted, "but maybe there's one more, mother—let's look again; then I won't ask any more—but let's look."

The sadness of the woman's face was rather deepened than relieved by the fleeting smile that played upon it as she leaned over towards the boy that he might himself examine the little embroidered bag that hung from her bosom, suspended by a string about her neck. A half whimpering cry escaped the pouting lips, silenced soon by a few crumbs that he had eagerly scraped from the bottom of the empty reticule.

"It's all gone now," he said at length, looking up with very trustful eyes into the face that was bended on his own. "Let's go fast; I'm awful hungry—will Uncle Arthur give us dinner when we get there?"

"Yes, dear—oh, yes, he'll give us lots of lovely things. I'm sure, I'm almost sure he will," the woman answered as cheerfully as she could. Yet an observant eye could hardly have failed to note the cloud of hesitation, almost of fear, that flitted across her face. Suddenly, however, before she had time to add another word, a quick motion of her head and a somewhat prolonged gaze behind showed that something had attracted her attention.

"It's bells!" the boy broke out forthwith; "it's sleigh-bells, mother—and we'll get a ride, won't we, mother?"

"I hope so, my child," was the response, her pace unconsciously growing slower, the sleigh coming fast behind them now. "Come, Irwin," as she stooped and half gathered the child in her arms, holding him up as she stepped out into the deep snow beside the road. She shivered as her feet and ankles sank in the ice-cold wave; not for the first time that day had she thus stood and seen some already laden sleigh pass her by with nothing but a friendly nod from its unknown inmates.

"Are they going to Uncle Arthur's too, mother?" the boy whispered as the snorting team was almost abreast of them, the steam flying from their dilated nostrils out on the wintry air.

"Hould there, begorra—stop them bloods there, driver," suddenly rang out in an imperious voice from the rear as the caravan swept past the tall figure in the snow. "Hould yer horses till we bid these folks the time o' day."

Something in the voice must have given the driver pause. At any rate, he slowly reined his hoary team. "What's the row about?" he asked sullenly, turning his head a little in the direction of his left shoulder. He was a professional driver, with only

one end in view—and that was either one end or the other of his tri-weekly route.

"There isn't anny row—not yet, annyway," was the pacific rejoinder; "but we're not goin' by a flag o' distress like that—are ye blind, I dunno?"

"No, I ain't," the driver answered snappishly; "what did you want me to see?"

"Them there passengers," came the answer in perfect good humour. "It's lookin' out for fares ye ocht to be, instead of gallivantin' past them, like as if they were bulrushes wid niver a soul to save." This elaborate sentence was trailed behind him as he sprang from the sleigh, hurrying back to the humble pair who had now regained the road. The woman's head was bowed, in evident confusion; but the child, his glee unhidden, had broken loose from her, the tired little feet gathering a new lease of strength as he toddled eagerly forward towards the now unmoving sleigh.

"What passengers?" roared the driver, evidently in high dudgeon at this sudden interference.

"Them passengers that's walkin'—I'll soon show ye," was the calm response, again flung over his shoulder as the man hurried on his mission; "come, ye little spalpeen, I'll load ye in a jiffy—I'll carry him, ma'am. Och, sure, he's no weight at all, just like a thimble on an elephant. Sure I could carry

the pair o' ye and never know I was at it," as he dropped a very decent courtesy to the half-protesting woman.

But he had retraced his way for only a step or two when he broke out in a kind of half wail, half howl: "Holy Mother, Jumpin' Bejabers—d'ye see that? What the—what the divil does he mean? Hi! stop—stop the varmint or I'll ——"

And there was just cause for this sudden consternation. For the ill-natured Jehu had suddenly chirruped to his horses and started them at a brisk pace towards home. "Let him walk if he wants to," he muttered as the team bounded forward; "can't wait for every fool that wants to get off an' pick berries along the road," wherewith, nodding and chuckling grimly to himself, he settled down firmly in his seat, to show that he was a man not to be trifled with.

But just as the team, glad to be released, were settling down to what bade fair to be a really spanking gait, there was a swift movement in the seat the Irishman had just deserted; and a tall, muffled figure began slowly creeping along the narrow outside rail, steadying himself on such shoulders as were nearest while he stole onward to the front of the sleigh. Before the driver knew he was there, a hand had gripped the reins, and, with a strength remarkable for so awkward a position, had checked the horses' pace with a

backward jerk that the driver himself could hardly have excelled. "Stop them—stop those horses, Judd," came in a low voice from a very resolute pair of lips as a couple of keen eyes fastened themselves on the scowling face beneath him.

The man cowed before the look. "I didn't know —I didn't know you wanted to wait, your Reverence," he began abashedly, at the same time reining the horses to a walk; "I thought you'd be cold, Dr. Leitch—I thought you was in a hurry."

"And you'd leave those poor creatures to freeze on the road, would you? Stop those horses—stop them still!"

"They're hard to hold, sir," the man muttered apologetically; "they're restless this cold weather—that's what made them start so sudden, sir," his whole demeanour indicating that he was dealing with some one whom he held in wholesome reverence.

"That's all right, Judd—I know you did it thoughtlessly," came in the kindliest voice from the older man, now descending from the sleigh and starting on his way to meet the trudging three who were by this time close behind.

II

DINNY'S TREAT

A MINUTE or two later the woman and her child had been lifted into the conveyance, the two escorts climbing in behind them, one on each side of the woman, who held her boy upon her lap. "Now lay on the bud," was the cheerful counsel of the Irishman as he tucked the buffalo robe around him, one arm about his daughter now seated on his knee; "you can't get to them Corners too quick for Dinny Riley—that's me, mind ye—I'm shiverin' like a tinant on rint day; lay on the bud."

But the driver still held his horses back, clearing his throat as if in some embarrassment. "That's all very fine," he began, chewing vigorously on the end of a straw he had picked from the bottom of the sleigh—"but them two is passengers now—an' what about their fare? That's what I want to know—who's a-goin' to pay their fare?"

The woman's face turned crimson, and with a quick movement she arose, her child still in her arms,

and struggled towards the side of the sleigh. Both men sought to restrain her. "Sit where you are, my woman," said the man who had been addressed as Dr. Leitch.

"I can't," she said, her face burning more than before. "I haven't any money. Please let me out."

But they resisted, and a general protest arose from the occupants of the vehicle. One suggested a collection. Suddenly the Scotchman's voice was heard. "What's yir name, woman?" he inquired in a strong Doric, looking around at her over a huge collar, the words stumbling through it as best they could.

"Menzies," she answered timidly, without lifting her eyes.

"Mistress Menzies?" he pursued, the accent on the first word, wrenching the consonants as only a Scotchman can.

The woman's face paled to whiteness, but no sound escaped her.

"Or it'll be Miss Menzies?" her questioner suggested; "that bairn'll be yir wee brither, I'm thinkin'?"

"Margaret Menzies," the woman faltered, her sad eyes averted, her comely face cast down; "that's my name—I'm just Margaret Menzies."

"Ye'll be gaein' to Glen Ridge?" continued her cross-examiner.

"Yes—or near it, at least. We walked from Hamilton."

"Don't let's get out, mother," suddenly piped in the boyish voice. "I want to ride. An' I want to sit on the front seat—I want to drive the horses."

The mother paid no attention. "Ah," said the Scotchman suddenly, "an' sae yon's yir ain bairn, is't? An' wha's gaein' to meet ye at Glen Ridge —wha micht be expectin' ye there?"

"Nobody," answered the woman slowly and sadly. The voice, of Scottish tinge though not in Scottish speech, betrayed delicacy and refinement. "I'm going to my uncle—but he's not expecting me. He doesn't know I'm coming."

"What does he dae?" with Scotch bluntness, especially noticeable in all matters commercial.

"My uncle?—he's a farmer; he has a farm near Glen Ridge."

"Then he'll hae plenty," and the Scotchman's voice had a note of great relief. "There'll be nae need o' takin' up a collection," as he turned this way and that to the passengers. "Forbye, the like o' that's mair fittin' for the Kirk, an' the Sabbath day. He'll pay what's owin'—the buddy's uncle—he'll settle for them baith," his remarks now directed to the driver. "Sae gang ye ahead, my man—I'll be glad mysel' when we stap a wee while at thae Corners

ye're speakin' o'—my insides is fair froze up, an' I'm thinkin' ——"

"Hould yer whisht," came suddenly in indignant Irish tones, "an' let dacent folks alone. I'll pay their fares, an' welcome—go on, driver, an' let him keep his bawbee for his Kirk and his Sawbath," the last word rolled out in contemptuous mimicry, "an' I hope the minister'll preach on the Good Samaritan; that's what I'd give to the pack av ye if I was the minister av a Scotch congregation—sure I'd sooner tackle the rale haythens, widout kilts, that ate yez honestly widout sayin' anny grace. I would now—begorra an' I would," grinning broadly as his hand went down towards a capacious pocket for the required cash.

The man beside him, now known as Dr. Leitch, was evidently growing in admiration of his companion. A curious smile played over his face as he turned and looked at the highly interesting features of this new-found friend. "I'll pay half," he said in a low tone; "how much is it? we'll do it together."

"Och, go on wid ye," returned the Irishman; "ye'll do nothin' o' the sort. Sure ye're just after tellin' me ye get yer pay in somethin' else than money—whativer the divil that means—an' that there critter on the front seat, he wouldn't take annything else.

Here, driver, how much is it?—take yer change out o' that."

"But I will," insisted the muffled form beside him, already fumbling for his pocketbook.

"Whisht now, I tell ye—be aisy, an' don't interfere when we're doin' business. I'll tell ye how we'll square it up," he said slyly, winking at his unknown friend; "ye can set 'em up when we get to them What-D'ye-Call-'em Corners—if we ever get there. I'm thinkin' they're like Mulcahey's cow—he was always braggin' about it, but nobody ever seen it yet. Here, driver," with which he passed over the coin of the realm, repressing at the same time a feeble outburst of gratitude from the woman at his side.

"McLarty there was badly alarmed for a while, for fear there was going to be a collection," the good doctor communicated in a whisper; "it's wonderful what fine Samaritans lots of people would be, if it weren't for the wine and the two pence," and those nearest him heard a very musical ripple of laughter.

"That Samaritan—the one in the Bible, I mean—was before Scotchmen were invinted," bubbled the other, now pocketing the change that had been handed back to him; "ye mightn't know who he is, might ye?"

"Yes, I know him. His name's McLarty—and he's the richest man in Glen Ridge. He owns con-

siderable property—one of the taverns belongs to him."

The man beside him started perceptibly. "Two taverns!" he exclaimed rather violently; "why, I thought there was only one. Sure I didn't bargain for anny opposition. What might ye call the one he owns—the tavern, I mean?"

But before his companion had time to make reply the sleigh, with a very interesting semicircle to its credit by the operation, swung like a flash around a corner that nobody could have possibly foreseen; and, with a loud halloo from the driver, marvellous though it may appear; with much puffing and snorting from the hungry steeds; with manifold barkings from quite a sufficient number of dogs that suddenly appeared, as if now and only now their hour at length had come; and with the appearance on the small projecting porch of a round-paunched and very hospitable-looking landlord, accompanied by a very substantial and smiling spouse, the caravan came to such a sudden stop that all the passengers went forward just enough to make it look as though they had joined in a general courtesy to their waiting host.

"This here's Liddel's Corners Tavern," the driver sung out, his tone as genial now, his air as important as though he were announcing Charing Cross Station; "everybody can get out if they like, an' every-

body's got to, anyhow. Hour and five minutes for refreshments. Everything you need inside—dining-room on the right, bar on the left—the sheep and the goats over again. An' the extra five minutes is for settlin' up. Good-day, Mr. Bole."

"Good-day, Judd," responded the cheery landlord; "it's a fine day."

"Yes," said Judd, grinning, "for polar bears, mebbe. Ever see such a lot o' froze-up stiffs?" pointing over his shoulder to the shivering company, now in the confusion of disembarking.

"Mosquitties didn't trouble you much on the way up, eh?" chuckled mine host. His wife, having swiftly numbered the passengers, had fled into the house in that panic of preparation so delicious to the female mind.

"No, some o' the women had fans with them—that kept them off pretty good. Where's the 'ostler, Mr. Bole?"

"He's just finishin' his dinner; he'll be out in a few minutes."

"Most generally takes the last course in the bar, don't he?" said Judd with a grimace, not waiting for a reply as he flung himself upon the restless team, his hands flying this way and that as he proceeded with lightning rapidity to unhitch them from the sleigh. It was really a study, this sudden meta-

morphosis that Judd had undergone. He was whistling now, the very soul of good nature. This transformation in Judd's demeanour had been observed many a time and oft by those familiar with him, and the most plausible explanation was that for this hour and five minutes aforesaid he allowed himself a brief relaxation from the severe dignity that none knew better than he was worthy of one set in authority over the stage between the city of Hamilton on the one hand and the village of Glen Ridge on the other. Some of the more carnally minded, it is true, ventured the opinion that this remarkable mellowing was not without some faint relation to the cheerful terminus at which it had its birth: to wit, the Liddel's Corners Tavern, with its eating-room on the one hand and its drinking-room on the other. For towards both these industries Judd was known to maintain a strict impartiality.

The landlord, after emitting a shrill whistle by dint of mouth and fingers three, towards the supposed location of the 'ostler—and it must be admitted his aim had a decided leaning to the left hand side—directed all his energies to the fitting reception of his guests. He was just in time to superintend the offices of Dr. Leitch and his Irish friend as they helped from their places in the sleigh the two passengers to whom they had given such

timely aid, whereafter the entire party filed eagerly within the open door, many an exclamation of satisfaction, many a deep-drawn sigh betokening the joy of returning warmth. A huge fire of logs glowed and crackled in an open fireplace set in the centre of what seemed to be the only living-room about the hostelry, the other two being set apart to the industries already indicated. About this grateful blaze, divesting themselves of their outer clothing, the little gathering soon was grouped, their hands outstretched to the leaping fire. The boy and the girl, obedient to the ancient law of human gravitation, were standing side by side; a few timid words had passed between them, both silent now as the crackling flame laid its charm upon them.

Happening to look up, Dr. Leitch's attention was attracted by the beckoning of his travelling companion; the Irishman was beside the window. "Look, for the love o' Hivin!" he said in a stage whisper as the other joined him, "wouldn't that knock ye cold? See that spalpeen—d'ye mind that, now?"

"Why, that's McLarty," replied his friend.

"I don't know what the critter calls himself; he's a Scotchman—an' I call them all Sandy. But d'ye mind what he's after?"

"No, I can't say I do, exactly; looking into the

sleigh, isn't he? I dare say he thinks he lost something."

"Nary a bit of it," returned the Irishman rather contemptuously; "unless he thinks he's lost a chance—he's lookin' to see if annybody else has left annythin'. That's what ails him—doesn't that bate the Dutch, now?"

The strong face of the older man was relaxed in merriment. "Don't," he began, with a kind of mock seriousness, "don't make light of our aristocracy. You'll have to treat Peter McLarty with respect if you're going to live in Glen Ridge—he's the biggest wig we've got in the settlement."

The Hibernian indulged in a swift grimace, accompanied by a shrug of the shoulders. "Sure, it's jokin' ye are?" he said, looking quizzingly at his informant.

"Not for a moment—I tell you, he's the biggest aristocrat we've got. He says so himself—so he ought to know. He came to Glen Ridge when it was a wilderness, fought the bears and wolves, cleared several farms, saved a little money, got several more farms by way of mortgage—made quite a bit of money, and now he's got a manufacturing business—makes screws, I think—so he's taken his place as the laird of the whole community. He's about the same to us as a lord would be to you, over there in Ire-

land; but he gets the name of being—well, of being what you might call a little near."

By this time the Irishman had broken into a broad grin. "Begorra, an' he looks more like a groom than a lord—it's helpin' the 'ostler he ought to be. Say, stranger," his tone suddenly changing as he dismissed the Scotchman from his thoughts, "let's go in where the gintlemen are—come on in an' have somethin'," moving as he spoke towards the little room on the left hand side; "it's a little warmth in the insides of him a man needs after drivin' across this God-forsaken country a cruel day like this. An' we'll drink to our bein' the best o' neighbours in Glen Rich—or whatever ye call the place we're goin' to. Say, what's your name, annyway? Then I can invite ye like one Christian should another."

"Leitch," said his tall companion, "my name's Leitch."

"Sure it sounds Scotch enough—but there's manny a dacent Scotchman. Mine's Riley—Dinny Riley—an' my father kept the Black Bull in Kilkarty for thirty year or more; an' he niver put a dhrop o' watter in the decanter till he died—so he niver. Come, Mr. Leitch, come on in wid me an' say what—sure it's a long time since we did the loikes o' this together."

A smile was on the other's face; he was evidently

enjoying the experience. "No, thank you, Mr. Riley," he answered cordially, "the fact is——"

"Niver mind the Riley part—an' lave off that Mister business—whin I drink wid a man, Dinny's me name—just plain Dinny. If a wee dhrop on a day like this don't mean good fellowship, it don't mean annything. Come on—dinner'll be waitin'."

"Well, Dennis," began his unrecognized friend.

"Quit it," broke in the other, commanding a formidable frown; "if there's one thing knocks me cold, it's to be called Dinnis. Niver got it since I was christened—only when my father used to lambaste me, that's what he always began with—an' when I got married they used it, I think. Dinny's the Irish av it, if you please, sir," this last coming with a courtesy.

"Well, Dinny, the fact is I never take anything like that—haven't for five and forty years. And if I can just hold out for other five and forty I'll talk the matter over with you—if we're together then," and the big, grave eyes turned and looked almost yearningly into Dinny's wondering face.

"An' where d'ye think that'll be?" a droll smile on the face of the questioner.

"In a milder clime than this, I hope—Dinny—since you wish me to call you that."

"Not too much milder, you don't mean, sir, do

you?" the Irish eye lighting with irrepressible humour.

His friend laughed in spite of himself. "No, I don't mean that. I mean 'where everlasting Spring abides,'" his face and voice taking on quick seriousness again. Such an absence of cant, such a strength of reality were in the words, that the other instinctively felt he was at least in the presence of an earnest man—and that is one of the great experiences of life.

"I'm afraid them choice resorts won't be for the likes o' me," he said, his tone almost as serious as the other's.

"She'll be there," came quietly, almost inaudibly, from the lips of the older man, nodding towards the group before the fire, "so you'll have to come, Dinny." The name, for some reason or other, seemed difficult for him to speak.

Rather a lengthened pause preceded Dinny's words. "Her mother's there," he said in a hushed voice, and the eyes that were turned on the sweet girlish form before the fire were full of mournful tenderness—"an' sure, she's the livin' image of her, she is. Her mother died when she was born, sir. An' she's the life o' me now—the very life o' me, sir."

Dr. Leitch nodded, a wealth of sympathy in the soulful face, and silence fell for several minutes.

"Mr. Leitch," came suddenly from the Irishman.

"Yes, what is it?"

"We won't take annything to-day, sir."

"No, not to-day, Dinny," returned the other gravely, whereat his companion turned and started slowly across the room towards the group beside the fire. Before he had quite reached them, a hand was laid on Dinny's shoulder. Turning quickly around he found himself face to face with his fellow passenger of the tam-o'-shanter.

"Hello!" sang out Dinny cheerfully, as though he had encountered an old friend; "might yer name be McParty?"

"Na, na, it's no' that. McLarty—my name's McLarty—Peter McLarty."

"That's what I heard tell—but I hate to belave annything like that about a man till I ask him to his face. Sure I thought it was a yarn they had on ye. Does that thing on yer head hurt ye?"

"Na, na," assured the other seriously; "that wadna' hurt onybody," summoning a sepulchral smile as he spoke.

"Then ye'll be wearin' it as a badge o' mournin', like—for some rilitive that died, like?"

"Na, na, naethin' o' the sort," returned the Caledonian a little impatiently; "it belonged to my graun'faither; it was his ain."

"Then he must have left ye a pile o' money," surmised Dinny, confident now that he was getting at the root of the matter.

"Na, na, he hadna' onything to leave. He was only a shepherd, ye ken. What siller I hae, I made it mysel'," and Dinny could see confirmation of Dr. Leitch's opinion in the way the man drew himself up in pride. "He was a Hielan'man, ye ken, and they a' wear ——"

"Might *you* be a Highlandman?" Dinny interrupted suddenly.

"Aye, nae doot. Aye, I'm a Hielan'man. I'm what ye micht ca' the heid o' the clan, ye ken."

"Then what the divil d'ye wear pants for?" Dinny demanded vigorously, sternly surveying the very pronounced piece of checkered goods that covered the Scotchman's nether limbs. "Sure I niver heard tell av a rale Highlandman that wore iver a pant at all, at all."

Mr. McLarty, thus unexpectedly arraigned, grew as red as the bonnet on his brow. "They're no sae bonnie as the kilts, I grant ye," he began confusedly, stealing a downward glance towards the less comely raiment, "but it's—it's ower cauld to dae wi'oot them, ye ken. But I hae a graun' kiltie at hame, at Glen Ridge, I'm meanin'. I'm keepin' them to be laid oot in. They belonged till my faither's faither,

like my bonnet," touching it reverently as he spoke, "but they werena' near wore oot when he slippit awa'—an' that's hoo I cam' to hae them."

"I see," said Dinny grimly, preparing to move on.

But the Scotchman was not through. His original errand still remained to be discharged. "I'll gang in wi' ye," he said in an undertone, drawing close up to Dinny and casting a tender glance towards the open door on the left.

"In where?" was the rather astonished reply—"in to dinner, do you mean?"

"Na, na, the ither place—where yon man wadna' gang. I'll dae instead—I'll tak' summat wi' ye," and his hand touched the other's arm as he began to move towards the inviting door. Also, he licked his lips.

Dinny's eyes flashed. "That'll do me nicely," he responded; "it'll be an experience of a lifetime—sure I belave this is the first time I iver had 'em set up by a Scotchman. It's mighty kind o' ye, stranger—ye're the first man that's asked me what I'd take since I came to Ameriky."

Whereat the Scotchman paled. This was very different from what he had expected—and he stood stock still. "I thocht—I thocht it was yirsel' that did the askin'," he stammered, as embarrassed as alarmed.

"Sure I did—but he wouldn't go wid me. So this is a new case altogether—we're startin' fresh," cheerfully explained the Irishman—"an' that's why I think it's mighty dacent av ye—come along."

"Mebbe, mebbe we'd better bide a wee," remonstrated the Scotchman; "I dinna want to force ye—I'm dootin' ye're only gaein' to please me."

"Niver a bit of it," returned his friend. "Sure it's delighted I'll be."

"Weel, mebbe it micht be as weel to wait till we've had oor dinner—they say it's guid for digestion," pleaded the Scot.

"Gives *me* cramps, after eatin'," said Dinny, a hand laid protectingly on his stomach.

"Weel, weel, to tell ye the truth," and there was a note of despair in Mr. McLarty's voice, "I dinna think I'd better gang at a'. I dinna want yon man," pointing towards the distant figure of Dr. Leitch as he spoke, "I dinna want him to ken I taste onything. He's my minister, ye ken—an' I dinna want him to see me gaein' in—he wadna' think it richt."

Dinny's eyes showed his amazement. "What?" he cried, "what's that ye're after tellin' me? Who might that man be, d'ye say?"

"Him? He's oor minister—yon's Dr. Leitch."

Dinny was standing still in speechless wonder. Suddenly a voice broke in on his reverie. The voice

was Judd's: "That's the truth, stranger. That's the minister of St. Andrew's Church. I call him the King of Glen Ridge—and if that's where you're goin' you'll find out I'm right. Didn't you see us grinning there, on the other side of the room—a great joke—we all knew what you were saying to him. Well, stranger, I congratulate you anyhow—you're the first man, I'll bet, that ever asked Dr. Leitch to have a drink. That's one you've got to your credit anyhow."

"Father," a girl's soft voice stole up from beneath, "let's go in to dinner—I'm hungry."

But Dinny was off—and the girl followed close behind. Across the room he strode nor stopped until he was opposite Dr. Leitch, already opening the door to the dining-room.

"Doctor," he began in an agitated tone, "it's yer pardon I'll be beggin', Doctor. Sure I niver misdoubted but ye were only an ordinary man. An' that gossoon—wid the balloon on his head—he tells me ye're the minister. Ye'll not think anny worse of me, will ye, Doctor?—there isn't anny livin' man thinks more o' the cloth than me—an' I beg yer pardon, Doctor—sure, I didn't mean annything but a bit o' hospitality."

Very handsome, and very lovable, was the face that looked into Dinny's troubled eyes. Kindly

merriment flowed from every feature. "Come, Dinny, none of this," he said, "it's the best joke I've had for years. I don't know any man that can stand more invitations than preachers can—even if they don't accept every call. Come on in now, come on with me, and let us have our dinner. What's her name?" he asked, turning and holding out his hand to the little girl.

"She'll tell ye," said Dinny; "tell Dr. Leitch yer name, mavourneen."

The child looked up shyly into the minister's face. Like everybody else, she felt its charm and beauty. "Nora," she murmured sweetly, "I'm Nora Riley."

"It's a bonnie name—like a bonnie lassie ought to have," the minister said as he led the way into the little room, the child's hand still in his. A moment later they were seated about the table, prepared to do ample justice to the good things upon it, which, if simple and unpretentious, were wholesome and abundant.

III

AN IRISH HEART MAKES BOLD

DINNY had already speared a potato, still unjacketed, with his two-pronged fork and was proceeding to its swift dismantlement, when suddenly he stopped, the savoury tuber in mid-air, his head slightly bowed. The child beside him looked in wonder, noting in a confused kind of way that this unusual pause at such a time had some connection with their friend on the other side of the table. For his head was bowed a moment, and no one, however unfamiliar with the exercise, could have failed to see that he was in the act of prayer. It was all over in a moment, so unostentatious and sincere, and the new-opened eyes had the old light of gentle merriment as they were fixed again upon the girl before him.

"Won't you say it for us all, sir?" Dinny ventured, a little timidly, as though perhaps he were asking too much; "say it out loud, sir, if it's all the same—sure an' it's thankful we ought to be this day. Yez'll all bow yer heads," this last directed to such fellow travellers as had already begun their meal.

The minister smiled, then reverently bowed his head again and briefly returned thanks for the good things already set, or about to be set, before them; a few words at the close, fervent in feeling, made reference to the strangers' need and invoked the guidance of the pilgrims' Friend.

Dinny renewed his attack on the potato. "Sure they both make me think av Ould Ireland," he said gravely, after allowing for a fitting pause.

"Both what?" inquired Dr. Leitch, glancing across the table.

"Both o' them; what I've got here," brandishing the potato—"an' what ye gave us. Sure ye'll find them both everywhere in Ould Ireland—an' the one helps a fellow as much as the other."

"What do you purpose doing in Glen Ridge?—what line of life, I mean—what do you intend to follow for a living?"

No trace of embarrassment marked the Irishman's reply. "I'm goin' to take Tim Loftus's place," he answered immediately; "I'm goin' to kape a tavern. An' mind ye, Dinny Riley's the boy that'll kape it right." He turned as he spoke and looked, not without a trace of pride, into the minister's face. "If a tavern isn't dacent, ye see, it's—well, it's ondacent, an' that wouldn't do at all, at all," shaking his head in fullness of resolve.

Something of a troubled expression looked out from the soulful eyes of Dr. Leitch; a shade of disappointment could be seen within them, mingled with yearning, almost affectionate yearning, for such was the habit of his soul to all mankind.

"They're mostly all that kind," he ventured after a pause; "nearly all 'ondacent,' as you call it—out here in Canada, at least. And I'm afraid Tim's was no better than the rest."

Dinny looked at him very solemnly. "Me an' Tim's two different men," he said with emphasis—"Tim didn't have anny little girl, I'm thinkin'. An' besides, he wasn't brought up like me; I wisht ye could have seen The Black Bull—my father kep' The Black Bull in Kilkarty, I think I told ye, an' he niver put a dhrop o' watter in the stuff he sold, not till the day he died, sir—an' he'd choke a man afore he'd let him get more nor was good for him. An' he always shut the doors by his own clock—I've got it in my chist—an' put the shutters up himself. An' the minister gave him a beautiful charrackter at his funeral, but nary a word too much—sure my father niver missed the church on the Sabbath day; he wore the same coat for a good forty year to go to church in, an' always fished a sixpenny bit out o' the tail pocket when he came forninst the plate at the door. Sure it's your church I'll be goin' to, sir—

when I get settled down a bit an' get the things out o' the chist. That's where me an' Nora'll go," and the smile of confidence and good will with which he looked across at the minister showed that he anticipated no little pleasure from that feature of his future life.

Dr. Leitch was evidently just a little taken aback. This kind of experience was new to him. "Don't make up your mind too quickly, Mr. Riley," he began. "There——"

"My name's Dinny—to you, annyway," interrupted the other.

"Well, I was saying you mustn't decide too hastily. You know, there are one or two other places of worship—and perhaps you wouldn't prefer ours."

"I'm goin' to yours, sir," Dinny declared, nodding towards his future minister. "What's its name?" he added.

"St. Andrews," returned Dr. Leitch. "St. Andrews Kirk, we call it."

"That's my kind," said Dinny; "that's where I'll go—an' I'll have a penny or two for the plate, mind ye that. Sure I'm not one o' the kind that takes it out in prayin'."

"You don't strike me as one of that kind," the minister remarked, smiling; "if you're always as

generous as you were with that poor woman, there isn't much of the skinflint about you."

"What woman?" inquired Dinny, for he had evidently forgotten.

"That woman with the little boy—the one whose fare you paid on the stage; the one we picked up on the road, you remember."

"Holy Smoke," cried Dinny in dismay as he glanced along the table and about the room, his search unfruitful; "if this here ain't a barbarous proceedin'! Sure it's haythen we are," rising as he spoke; "sit still, Nora—I'll not be long," as the child started to follow him; "but if this isn't haythenish, askin' a blessin'—an' them two wid niver a bite to ate."

"Where are you going, father?" cried the girl, loath to let him out of her sight.

"Sure I'm goin' to get that callant an' his mother. I'll hold ye they're starvin' this minute; but we'll soon fix that—if they haven't forgot how to go through the motions. They looked like it," the last words coming faint as he vanished through the door that led into the outer hall. An instant later his face reappeared. "Will ye please stay wid the little girl, Doctor?" he requested; "the Doctor'll take care av ye, Nora," with which he was gone again.

Casting his eyes about for the woman and her

child, a muffled cry suddenly broke from him as he observed three or four forms bowed above the prostrate figure of the mother, among whom, tearful and wailing, stood her boy, his eyes fixed greedily upon his mother's face. Hurrying across the room, Dinny elbowed his way in close to the settee, or rude lounge, on which the unconscious form of the woman had been laid. The landlord was there, his portly wife beside him, both in a state of official agitation.

"What might be the matter?" Dinny whispered, his eyes still fixed in evident admiration on the delicate features of the unresponsive face. Admiration, indeed—and not without good cause. For the countenance before him lay in unconscious beauty, less the beauty of chiselled lines than of spiritual purity; long eyelashes, black as jet, touched the fringe of cheeks whose whiteness was like to marble; wavy hair, dishevelled though it was, lay in the charm of rich abundance upon the neck and bosom that still showed signs of life; the shapely nose, the thin, mobile lips, bespoke delicacy of character and fineness of feeling; while upon the whole face there rested the light and peace that are only to be found as the handiwork of sorrow, and the expression of the whole countenance—even though the eyes were closed—was eloquent of patience, suffering, disappointment, tragedy, all borne in secret and alone. That face—

for those who had eyes to see—betokened some trembling secret, its handiwork obvious to such hearts as were sympathetic enough to discern its signature in every lineament.

"What might be the matter?" Dinny repeated, his former question as yet unanswered. He looked up as he spoke, and the first to meet his gaze was Mr. McLarty himself.

"She's fainted," mumbled the Scotchman; "she fainted clean awa'—I'm dootin' it's the heat."

Dinny sniffed contemptuously—"The heat—I'm dootin' it's the cold," he amended. "But she's breathin', all right—she needs a stimulant; get her some brandy, quick," he ordered, turning to the landlord.

"That's what I thocht she'd be needin'—I thocht that mysel'," chimed in Mr. McLarty.

"Then why the divil didn't ye order it?" came from between Dinny's teeth.

"I didna' like to tak' the liberty," explained the Scot; "some folks thinks it's wrang to tak', ye ken—an'——"

"An' some folks think it's dear to buy," flung back Dinny, by this time engrossed with the broken-hearted boy, assuring him that his mother would soon be all right again.

Which indeed proved to be true. The tavern-

keeper, with an eye to business and humanity alike, lost no time in producing the stimulant Dinny had prescribed; which, with dint of fanning and chafing, and sundry appeals from the boy beside her, soon resulted in the return of consciousness, the big plaintive eyes starting with wonder, then breaking into a half-abashed smile as they opened and fixed themselves upon the anxious company about her. Gently but quite resolutely the woman insisted on rising to her feet, making light of the indisposition that had overtaken her, thanking those about her for their kindness, but giving them unmistakably to understand that further attention was unnecessary. Motioning her child to follow her, and adjusting the bosom of her dress (which the landlord's wife, with the instinct of universal womanhood, had opened as the first aid to restoration) she began to move over towards a quiet corner of the little hall.

This led them, though at a little distance, past the half-open door of the dining-room from which Dinny had emerged. The lad cast a hungry look within; indeed, he plucked his mother's gown and pointed eagerly towards those who were seated at the long table in the middle of the room, at the same time saying something in eager tones which the general hubbub rendered inaudible to Dinny. This was quite too much for the Irish heart, whereat he

hurried over to where she was standing by the window, her lips close to the ear of her boy, as though she were whispering some word of comfort to the hungry child.

"Might ye be feelin' better, ma'am?" Dinny began, the tone full of deferential interest.

"Yes, thank you, sir," she answered, and her manner seemed to indicate that his concern, at least, was not resented. "It was a strange weakness that came over me," she added, smiling faintly; "I think it must have been the long walk—but whatever it was, I was completely unconscious. It alarms me some," she went on in a low voice. "Don't cry, Irwin," as she stooped to caress the lad, "mother's all right now, dear."

Emboldened by the length of the woman's speech, especially as her disposal of the others had been so summary, Dinny came to the point at once.

"Sure it's hunger that ails the lad. An' that's the very thing I came out for—to fetch yez in—come away in wid me and have yer dinner. There's some good potaties there, wid their jackets on," he added, something of embarrassment in his voice; for the woman's eyes, in an absent sort of way, were fixed intently on him.

A momentary pause ensued.

"Let us sit down here a minute," the woman

suddenly enjoined, as if she had come to a quick conclusion. "I won't detain you long. But I've decided—I've decided to—to trust you."

"What's that, ma'am?" said Dinny, doubtful if he had heard aright.

"There's something I am going to ask you to do for me," she answered, her voice gaining in confidence—"if it should be necessary. It's about my boy here—it's about Irwin."

"Yes, ma'am," was all Dinny said; but there was something in his voice that pledged his soul.

"Well," she began with some hesitation, "it's this, Mr.—— I really don't know your name, although I'm venturing to ask this of you." She paused.

"Riley's my name," said Dinny, his lips closing tight.

"And mine's Menzies—I'm Margaret Menzies. Well, I was going to ask this, Mr. Riley. Irwin's all I've got—and I'm faint and weary. I've got a strange kind of fear lest I may not live to my journey's end—and that bad spell I had has frightened me. I'm on my way to my uncle's farm, near Glen Ridge. He's my Uncle Arthur—Arthur Ainslie. I haven't seen him since I was a child; and he doesn't know I'm—he doesn't know we're coming. And I want you—I trust you, sir, trusted

you from first I saw your face when you came back to bring us to the sleigh—I want you, if anything should happen me—if I should fall seriously sick—to take me, to take us, I mean, to Uncle Arthur's house. You understand?"

The Irishman nodded. The nod was like an oath; and he was busy scribbling something on a scrap of paper he had drawn from his pocket.

"But if—if anything should happen to me—I mean if I should die, you are not to take Irwin to my uncle."

"What's that, ma'am?" Dinny interrupted; "*not* to take him, did ye say?"

"Yes, not to take him; at least, not at first—he's to be taken to another man."

"Another man!" echoed Dinny.

"Yes, to another man," she repeated, her tone low and rigid, her lips set and white. "Another man, and he lives somewhere near Glen Ridge. His name's McLarty—David McLarty. I don't know how he might receive you—or Irwin—but ——"

"McLarty, did ye say, ma'am?" Dinny interrupted, drawing quickly close to her and dropping his voice to a whisper. "Sure, d'ye know the man?"

A look like madness mingled with the sadness of the smile that played a moment about the woman's

mouth. "Yes," she said, her cheek, a moment blanched, now like a flaming coal. "Yes, I know the man."

"Ye'd know him if ye could lay eyes on him, ma'am?" Dinny pursued impatiently; "is it long since ye set eyes on him, might I ask ye?"

"It's years." And every year seemed to be rehearsed in the words, so charged with meaning.

"But ye're sure ye'd know him?"

The woman nodded.

"Then sure ye can deal wid him at first hand," quoth Dinny exultantly, his eyes searching the now almost empty hall. "It's myself can show him to ye, ma'am—look there."

Margaret Menzies' face was like the dead. "No," she murmured hoarsely—"I mustn't see him—I won't, I can't. Where is he? Where did you say he was?" her lips ghastly white.

"There—right forninst ye, that there one by the flower pot. Don't ye twig him, ma'am?—that man wid the cloth cart-wheel on his head?"

The woman's eyes leaped where Dinny pointed. Yet, amid all her intensity of gaze, by a kind of involuntary movement she drew her boy convulsively to her side, hiding his face in the folds of her dress.

"That man with the shawl over his arm?" she faltered.

"Yes," returned Dinny, "the very same. Sure he's the only man around, when ye come to think of it. The rest are all gone in to ate a bite—but the Scotchman can't afford it, ma'am, he's too rich—not to cast anny slur on a friend of yer own, my lady," he hastened to add by way of apology.

The colour surged back to the chiselled face. "That's not him," she said, hardly above a whisper —"that's not David."

"But that's McLarty, ma'am. An' he lives at Glen Ridge—he told me so himself."

The woman's mind seemed to swim for a minute, the struggle showing itself in the troubled eyes. "I think I understand," she said tremblingly after a little. "Isn't this man's name Peter?"

"I think so, ma'am," returned the Irishman, after brief reflection; "I think his minister—he's in the dining-room—told me that. An' he looks like it might be, now don't he, ma'am—that there red hoop-skirt on his head looks like his name was Peter, don't it now?" and Dinny did his best to laugh, searching her face for some answering merriment.

But the face before him bore no sign just now of anything but tragedy. "I think that's the brother of the man I know—the man I knew," she said quietly. "But you won't forget what you promised

me? You'll take Irwin—if it should be necessary—to the man—to the man I said?"

Dinny's eyes repeated his vow. "Might I make so bold as to ask, ma'am," he went on, not without some hesitation, "what ye might be goin' to do when ye're at your journey's end? At yer Uncle Arthur's, I mean?"

"I'm going to work," she said simply.

"What at?" he pressed; something about his tone and his look showed that his interest was sincere.

"Whatever I can find to do—if my strength returns to me," she answered resolutely.

"In a house, ma'am?"

"Yes—or anywhere."

The Irishman's brows were knit in thought. Suddenly his face lighted. "Sure ye're just the one I'm lookin' for," he began, as if a load were taken off his mind. "It's some one o' that kind I'll be wantin'—some one to redd up, an' give a hand around the tavern. It's plenty o' work there'll be to do, settin' things to rights an' gettin' settled down."

"What tavern?" she asked, abstractedly; the boy was trying to draw her towards the half-open door.

"It's in Glen Ridge—it's the tavern where Tim Loftus used to kape. An' it's meself that's goin' to kape it now—'The Buck,' that's what they call it; yes, 'The Buck Tavern,' that's its name, even if it isn't

the most illigant one in the world. Say, ma'am, will ye give me a hand wid the reddin' up?" he suddenly inquired, coming to an impulsive conclusion. "Sure it would be a God's kindness to me, ma'am, if ye would," he concluded. The eagerness in his tone would have deceived the very elect.

She looked at him steadfastly, her fingers toying with the boy's flowing hair. "I think I would," she said; "I'm not afraid of work."

"Then it's a bargain," Dinny returned swiftly; "ye're engaged now. An' here," withdrawing his hand from his pocket as he spoke, "here's a pickle o' wages—on account, like. Oh, yes, ma'am, but ye must," as the woman began to protest; "sure it's always a suvrin that binds a bargain; this one binds you—an' the other fixes me," wherewith he tried to thrust the two coins into her hand. "All right, sonny, take 'em then," as he saw Irwin's hand eagerly outstretched; "sure it's the same thing—he'll be the treasurer, ma'am, an' some day ——"

"Stage for Glen Ridge starts in fifteen minutes," suddenly broke in a stentorian voice; "passengers ready in a quarter of an hour—Glen Ridge at half-past three."

"Holy Moses," cried Dinny in mock alarm, "an' me niver had my dinner yet. An' them sharks 'll have the last potaty inside o' them in there. Come,

ma'am—come, ye little spalpeen," seizing Irwin in his arms as he spoke, "come away in wid me, an' we'll ate a spud an' drink a cup o' tay to the prosperity o' The Buck Tavern an' its illigant proprietor," wherewith, by sheer force of enthusiasm and good will, he ushered them to the now almost deserted dining-room, the few inmates gazing with wonder at the belated three.

IV

THE FIGHT AMONG THE PINES

THE river that meandered through the village of Glen Ridge was called the Speed, so named, there is little doubt, because it had never been known to hurry. Some Scotchman had named it so in a spasm of merriment. Very leisurely, save for its annual spurt when the spring freshet quickened it to madness, did the dignified little river make its way between the banks that sloped upward on either side until they found their crown in hills as picturesque and varied as any in all the countryside. And of these hills Glen Ridge was particularly proud; it was the boast of her citizens, almost all of them hill-born as they were, that no one could leave the town—for by such a name they fondly called it even then—without going up a hill. This was not exactly true, for there was one exit by the level road that skirted the east bank of the river—but since it was only the exception that proved the rule, it in no wise tempered the aspiring claim.

Margaret Menzies must have stood still a good five minutes before she turned in at the gap that led

up to the little farmhouse in the forest. And well might she pause and look; for the scene was one to engage any eye that could detect the beautiful, any heart that answered to the romantic, in nature's wondrous book. The distant hills, each with its wooded crown, melted into softness against the evening sky, all dappled as it was in crimson, and purple and gray. Lonely and still, with but a house here and there nestling in its bosom, the mighty trees stood in their primeval splendour, a stern sort of lonely dignity about them as they loomed aloft in the now dying light; bare and leafless, but alive, and content to wait for the unforgetting summer, even as they had waited for countless years before. A certain nameless pride seemed to mark these monarchs of the forest; mayhap they dimly knew themselves the true pioneers of this yet to be fruitful wilderness, though doomed to death at the hands of the tiny intruders at their feet.

The river, slowly winding, glistened in the evening light; only the central current could be seen, separating the broad decks of ice that the hand of winter had outbuilt from either shore. Far in the distance, faintly echoing, Margaret Menzies fancied she heard, only once or twice, the merry shout of youthful skaters—and the sound was one of mysterious loneliness, so incongruous would play appear to be amid these stern surroundings that the exiles from across the sea

had come forth to face and to subdue. Once she happened to look aloft; an eagle, not unfamiliar in those far back days, was floating in the azure. Had the light not been failing she might have seen his awful eye—as it was, stirred by the tension of the hour, she thought she could catch its gleam, shuddering as she turned away. Far off, probably at the distance of half a mile, on the very crest of a wooded hill across the river, she could descry the swaying forms of a team of oxen, their heads low bent as they bore some homesteader and his load towards the humble roof that afforded him a home in this distant wilderness. Indeed, even as she looked, a light suddenly gleamed from a little window a few hundred yards beyond the oxen's head; in the same moment she heard, floating phantom-like across the valley, the yokel's shout to his beasts of burden. There was a new note in the call—he too had seen the light—and Margaret Menzies sighed wistfully as the stillness again settled on her heart.

"Are you trying to find Uncle Arthur's, mother?" came suddenly upon her reverie from the boy beside her. The woman started; she had almost forgotten he was there.

"No, dear, no," she said—"I know where Uncle Arthur lives; it's right in here, Irwin. Come."

"How do you know, mother?"

"By that," she answered, pointing to the base of a mighty pine that stood close beside the road. "That's what they told us in Glen Ridge—and see, you can read those letters, Irwin? That's what they told us to look for," and she bent over and traced with her finger the initials that had been carved in the bark. "A. A.," they read.

"What does it mean?" the lad inquired.

"It means Uncle Arthur's name," was the answer. "It means Arthur Ainslie—see, Irwin, there's the house, there, beyond that bunch of trees."

The boy soon saw it and hastened forward. He was hungry, as usual. "We'll stay all night, won't we, mother?" was his next inquiry. They were now close to the little house.

"Yes," she answered nervously; "yes, I hope so."

The early darkness of Canadian winter was settling down about the rude cabin before whose door Margaret Menzies was almost standing now. From the slight eminence on which the house was built could be seen the little patches of land that the hard toil of the pioneers had reclaimed from the surrounding forest; but the whispering woods were all about, dark and ominous in the dying light.

The woman's eye, the spectacle still unfamiliar to her, roved once again over the far-flung wilds, a little shudder revealing the sense of loneliness the scene produced. Probably she was thinking of far-off bonnie Scotland, with its broad acres of well-tilled soil, its cozy cottages, its garden fruitfulness, its hedges of bursting brier. Yes, this was certainly different enough, rough and rebellious as the all but virgin wilderness is bound to be. Yet there flowed about her—although she could hardly be expected to realize it yet—the wild air of freedom, the breath of purity; and those hills and trees stood grandly independent about her, worthy of the coming nation whose sons should breathe this air of liberty, themselves independent as the noble hills that should overlook their homes of peace and plenty.

"Irwin," she began, her voice not as steady as before, "will you wait here—till mother comes out? I won't be long, dear—but mother wants to go in alone first."

The boy's lip dropped a little; his eyes, too, roved a moment about the besetting woods. Some word of dissent was spoken.

"But see, Irwin—look, here's a sleigh, dear," drawing him towards a pair of bob-sleds not far from the door, "and you can drive, Irwin—see,

there's a whip—you can drive till I come out. Mother won't be long."

Thus beguiled the boy consented; and soon he was driving furiously, lashing his phantom steeds with high delight. Whereupon Margaret Menzies turned her face, now almost as white as the snow about her feet, towards the entrance of the humble domicile. The door was on the farther side of the house. She knew the man she sought must be at home, for a curling stream of smoke floated from the rude chimney, falling back again upon the wintry air.

Timidly she rapped with uncovered hand. It was such a gentle knock, yet it seemed to echo from the listening woods. She waited a little, panting, then knocked somewhat louder than before. Then her hands went to her bosom, as if she would still the turbulent heart beneath. For she heard a movement within, then the sharp yelp of a watch-dog, followed by a stern command to silence. A moment later a heavy footfall started across the floor—and Margaret Menzies' face, wrung with pleading and hope and nameless fear, seemed to be turned to the cold sky above her. Yet already the stars were twinkling forth, bravely grappling with the deepening gloom.

Slowly the door was opened, a stalwart form dimly apparent to her as she stood trembling like a leaf.

"Why, bless my heart, it's a woman! But what on earth ——"

What the question was to be remains unknown; for, with a low cry, and with outstretched arms, her strength unable longer to bear up beneath the strain, Margaret Menzies swayed forward, resisting desperately the while, and would have fallen prone if the man before her had not flung out his arms and caught her.

Slowly, and very gently, he half led and half dragged her towards the fire, a large chair standing empty before it. "Bless my heart," he murmured in much agitation as he made his way, "did onybody ever ken the like o' this? It's a nice like lookin' sight I'd be, if the minister, or ony ither body, found me wi' a woman in my arms! Ma certes! I didna' think I'd be so handy at it," his face a study as native humour mingled with deep concern. "Is it the cold, think ye?" he asked solicitously as he saw the woman's eyes opening, for the weakness was of brief duration, more emotional than physical.

The drooping lashes rose slowly from the wistful eyes, which were now fixed in yearning eagerness upon the strong face above her. Arthur Ainslie, his earnest gaze resting very intently on her, was leaning over the back of the chair, evidently much

relieved by this timely recovery of his unexpected guest.

"No," she faltered, and the rude pioneer noted how low and sweet was her voice. "No, I'm not cold—but I was overcome, I think."

"There's little doot o' that," he answered in his blunt Scotch way; "ye'll be hungry, woman. Wait a minute till I get ye some bannocks—they're no' bad," he affirmed as she began to dissent, "for I made them mysel', an' I ought to ken."

"No, no," she exclaimed; "oh, no, I don't want anything to eat, thank you."

"It's a cold day for travellin'," he began, a little embarrassment in his manner, after a somewhat lengthy pause; "where were ye bound for, might I ask?"

The woman turned her beseeching eyes full upon him. "I was coming here," she said, her face pale in the firelight, her gaze still fixed on him.

The man's earnest face was clouded in perplexity. "Here!" he echoed, "comin' here—ye dinna' surely mean it was to this hoose ye were comin'?"

"Yes," she answered calmly, her voice gathering strength, "yes, to this house. You're my Uncle Arthur," she broke out, her voice rising in spite of herself, struggling to her feet as she spoke. "Yes, you're my Uncle Arthur—and I'm Margaret

Menzies—I'm Janet Ainslie's daughter, your sister's child," and now she stood before him with outstretched hands.

But he too was on his feet, his face aflame, his lips quivering as he tried to speak.

"Ye canna' mean it; no, no, it canna' be," he cried, coming closer to her and touching her shoulders with both hands, peering the while into the white face before his own. "It canna' be that my dream's come true—what I've longed for, an' lookit for, an' askit God to gie me, ever since Janet died—ye canna' be wee Maggie, the bonnie bairn I left in Janet's hame lang syne, playin' wi' her doll? I mind the glint o' the sunshine on her hair. Ye're jokin' wi' me, woman."

"No, uncle," she returned, her hands still outstretched to him, "no, it's me—I'm Margaret Menzies."

"Bide a minute," he suddenly directed, "just a minute—till I kindle a light," with which he stepped to the narrow pantry a few yards away, reappearing in a moment holding before him a lighted candle. The flickering flame fell upon her face.

"Aye, aye," he cried in an instant, the voice broken and trembling now, "aye, I'd ken ye by yir mother. Come, Margaret, come—like ye used to when ye were a bairn," and his outstretched arms

went about her, the candle spluttering jealously from the little chair where he had laid it down.

But Margaret Menzies' strength seemed to have returned greater than before, for almost violently she drew back, wrenching herself free from her uncle's arms.

"Don't, Uncle Arthur, oh, don't," she pleaded, her voice a wail; "you don't know—or you wouldn't. Oh, Uncle Arthur—you won't want me."

"What?—I'll no' want ye. Ye dinna' mean I'll no' be wantin' my ain sister's child unner my roof? No' want Janet's Margaret, wha I've been prayin' to see this mony a lang year? Oh, Margaret, it's like the flowers in May to see yir bonnie face."

But by this time the woman's quivering form had sunk into the chair beside her, her face hidden in her hands while wailing sobs convulsed her. Her heaving bosom told the tale of shame and sorrow, while now and then a low cry broke from the trembling lips. "Oh, what shall I do?" she moaned; "how can I—how can I tell you? Oh, uncle, I can't, I can't—for I know you won't love me, I know you won't want me any more."

"For God's sake, Margaret, tell me what's the matter—ye're like to break my heart. Is it a matter o' money—or is there onything ye want? Tell me, woman," he pleaded, trying gently to release her

face from her hands, "an' let us talk it oot. I canna' help ye till I ken," and he sat down beside her on the arm of the chair, his hand timidly touching her cheek or gently laid upon her hair, for this was a situation that had not come often into his lonely life.

Nothing broke the silence but the muffled sobs at quick intervals from the bended one; when suddenly, without knock or warning, the door was pressed quickly open by some one from without. Both started where they sat, their eyes leaping to the open door. "Mother, I'm hungry—I'm hungry, mother," came the child's imperious voice, as the aperture grew wider. And there, his hand still upon the latch, his face aglow with fullness of boyhood's health, his inquisitive eyes searching the humble house and lodging at last upon the sleeping collie by the hearth, stood the boy; unabashed, as though his were the most welcome presence in the world, all ignorant of the tragedy and the anguish for which his very being stood, he slowly closed the door behind him and made his way, boylike, over towards the slumbering dog. "I want some cookies, mother," he took time to inform her without turning from his course, and he spared but a brief glance for the face of the unknown man on the arm of the chair in which his mother rested.

Well for the poor laddie that he could not see that

face! For it was terrible to behold. Like some rocky promontory it looked forth, half veiled in driving mist; grief, and dismay, and storm of soul; love that would turn to bitterness, and hope that had turned to ashes; shock and shame and terrible reproach, with something like awful fear—all these looked out from the strong and even noble face that was now fixed as rigidly on the little Irwin as though Death himself had suddenly entered that cabin door.

Margaret Menzies, summoning all her strength of will, slowly turned her eyes till they could see the face above her. No answering look met her own; her uncle's was still riveted on the boy. The latter, all unconscious of the bitter drama, apparently forgetful for the time of the hunger he had proclaimed so vigorously, was already on his knees before the fire, his hands deep in the woolly sides of the startled collie.

But Margaret still looked steadfastly towards the face above her. Perhaps the man grew conscious of the mute appeal; in any case, withdrawing his eyes from the boy on the other side of the room, he turned slowly about till his face looked full on Margaret's. But such a look! She thought she beheld in it the sentence of death, darkly revealed to her by the candle's sombre light—and with a

low, surging cry, like some wild thing that catches the first glimpse of its destroyer through the aisles of the forest, she sank to her knees at his feet, her arms clinging convulsively to him, her splendid hair dishevelled as she crouched low before his chair. What she had to fear she knew not. Avenger of sin, by God or man appointed, she must have known he could not be. Beyond his poor power, or that of other mortal, lay the dark tragedy of her life. At the worst, if worse there were to be, she could be again but homeless and loveless, adrift upon life's cruel sea as she had been before. Yet hers was that dark unreasoning fear that attests the Being and the Wrath of God. Thus, at least, does He make the wrath of man to serve Him; even of the evil man—though Arthur Ainslie was far from that. Human anger, and contempt, and scorn, but do His bidding, though they know it not. Thus, jealous though He be, does He make our sinful fellow creatures, even when more guilty than ourselves, to wreak our punishment. Himself the Judge supreme, He yet invests a thousand deputies with the right to pronounce our guilt and the power to execute our doom.

"Oh, uncle, don't," she moaned, her face hidden deeper. "Oh, Uncle Arthur, be pitiful to me—oh,

God, be merciful," her voice rising to a cry and sinking to a whisper again.

The fire went out upon the hearth; still the man sat erect, still the woman knelt low, amid the awful silence. The boy arose, marvelling at the strange scene, then crept softly across the floor and stood beside his mother, his hand sometimes stroking the soft hair, sometimes vainly trying to pat the hidden cheek; once or twice he lifted his eyes to look upon the man's face above him, then dropped them quickly on his mother. The semi-darkness revealed enough, even to him.

Margaret Menzies never knew how long she knelt thus; for by and by the candle's feeble flame died down in its socket, going the way of the extinguished fire, and the darkness of the Canadian winter night swallowed up the little cabin in the woods, stealing in by the narrow window opposite the door, until the last ray of light fled before it and left it in possession of hearts and hearth alike. The keenest mind can keep no record of time amid darkness such as this; the minutes, even the hours, make their escape unknown beneath its sheltering mantle. But Margaret Menzies knelt long; mute, unsobbing now, simply clinging to the only source of hope and home left to her in all this weary world. Once or twice, in fullness of pain, there flitted before her mind the

memory of days now long past and fled when she had bent by these selfsame knees—not in silence then, but to lisp her childish prayer when she could not say it to her mother. She remembered now many a word of tender merriment, all the sweeter because her uncle had spoken them in the dear language of her native land; many a caress, many a good-night kiss. How lightly she had regarded them in the long ago, heedless of them as childhood always is—but how precious now if they could but come again, now, when the silence and the night were like to break her heart!

Swift as thought there came before her the parting scene, not yet effaced, when her uncle had spent his last night beneath the thatched roof of the old home before he set sail for the Western world; the grief, the hope, the thrill of it all came over her once again. She saw once more the sweet face of her mother as she bade good-bye at their cottage door to this same man, her mother's only brother; and she heard again the rumble of the cart that bore him, his oaken chest perched high upon it, down the lane to the road that was at long last to lead him to the sea. Then the letters from the absent one, all so full of his new life and that new land, so frequently received while her mother lived.

And slowly, following her train of thought, there

swam about her the darkness of a far later day—the day of her mother's death; which was soon followed by the deeper shadow of the grave in the old kirkyard where they laid the dear form to rest. That last had been a terrifying gloom—she had looked down into it as the Scottish winter day was dying—a gloom like to this that enwrapped her now. She had learned at the time, or shortly after—and by what means she scarcely knew—that her far-distant uncle had been well-nigh broken-hearted; for this only sister had been the dearest treasure of his life.

And then—oh, then—after her mother's face was hidden and she was left alone! All that followed was not forgotten yet—though she had often prayed God to help her to forget. Her cheek burned like fire even now, and her lips were parched and dry—those same lips that had hardly curbed the quivering pain of orphanhood before they were stilled by the fervid kiss of love. Another's love, new and wonderful, different from any she had ever known before! And then—oh, then!—the darkness, and the anguish, and the abyss of remorse and shame—even now, crouching in the gloom, her fluttering heart leaped in a wild riot of half hate, half madness—and all of love—as suddenly the child beside her, trembling too amid the gloom, tried to encircle her neck with his groping arms. She started, as though she

would have torn him aside—then lifted her own arms, her head still bended low, and drew him to her in almost savage violence, her hot lips pressed upon his neck, burrowing down in a dumb, plaintive way along the warm soft flesh of the child that she had borne.

"I was more sinned against—oh, Uncle Arthur—I was more sinned against than sinning," she moaned aloud, scarce knowing she was using speech at all. The boy half freed himself from his mother's too passionate clasp, wondering silently what her strange speech meant. But he did not know; he still stood in the compassionate dark—and the uncle uttered never a word.

By and by the man arose, still silent, and made his way to the door. Opening it, he passed out into the night. Just as he stood a moment in the open space Margaret Menzies raised her head and looked. A dim film of light came through the door, cast from the snow without, and she could see her uncle's face. There was more of pity than of fear in her heart as she beheld it, for it was the face of anguish, sorrow striving to hold its own against the terrible wrath that had been the first to possess him. That face, usually so composed and strong, was now all unstrung with the emotion that wrung him; the quivering lips, the cheeks blanched to whiteness, the

eyes and brow that seemed swept by storm, all told the struggle into which his soul had been thrust so suddenly. And beyond the face—fit setting for it—she caught a swift glimpse of the giant trees, gently whispering together as though the darkness of the night had called them to communion, great stately sentinels, almost awful in their purity as they stood in the dignity of health and truth against the darkened sky. And the hills too—these were towering back of all, unmoved and immovable, their heads thrown back against the sky, in mute eloquence standing as though they impersonated the Judgment Day.

Her eyes were soon hidden again, soon again the closing door shut her up to the night that drenched the little cabin with its gloom—but still she saw, trembling with unreasoning fear, the calm and majesty of God's great Inanimates, so pure, so passionless, beyond the assault of temptation or the bitterness of remorse.

All this, too, was what Arthur Ainslie sought, though he would not have acknowledged it himself. He knew the peril of the moment, knew the fearful violence of his mood—and he had gone forth to seek strength and comfort, after the habit of his life. Religious as he was in his inmost heart; sternly resolved to honour his Christian profession; proud,

in a secret unconscious way, of his position as an elder in the kirk, even as his father had been before him, it never yet occurred to him that these Sublimities about him could have aught to do with calming his spirit or casting out the devil of wrath that was raging in his soul. Quite otherwise had he been schooled. There was no worship, he had been taught to believe, except in direct fellowship with God; no approach to the Most High save through the appointed channel that all men ought to know. Wherefore, although his eyes and his heart turned irresistibly towards the Splendour about him, he regarded it all with indifference, unconscious of its power and its ministry.

Wherefore, Arthur Ainslie did his best to pray. But with poor success. His head was bared, his face slightly upturned, his lips moving inaudibly. But the hot tide surged back upon his heart, swamping the good seed he was so earnestly trying to implant; and his mind, like his eyes, would persist in wandering to the giant trees and the silent hills and the broad darksome sky. Wandering on, scarce knowing whither his feet led him, he found himself entering the byre; he could hear the heavy breathing of the animals, and they turned, soft-eyed and wondering, as he entered. He stroked one or two of them, tossed them some fodder from the rack—then stood

musing; and while he was musing the fire burned. The low roof seemed to suffocate him; almost violently he hurried out, breathing more freely as he stood again beneath the open sky, the trees and hills calmly greeting his return. The storm was abating; the wind slowly sinking in his soul. Yet the tempest swelled again when he reflected on the bitterness of his disappointment, on the shame that had so suddenly befallen him. For Margaret Menzies' mother had been almost his idol—as nearly so as anything human could ever be to a nature such as his—and this had been his day-dream for many a weary year, that her daughter should cross the sea to fill his lonely home with the light and music of a woman's presence. Not that Arthur Ainslie would have acknowledged his anger to be born of disappointment, even in part; oh, no, he sincerely believed that it was born only of zeal for the law of God that had been broken, only of hatred for the sin with whose bitter fruit he had been thus suddenly confronted.

Whereat his wrath rose apace again. "The way o' the transgressor is hard," he murmured to himself —"an' it deserves to be; it's the will o' God," he added sternly as he looked up into the radiant heavens, powerless as they were to teach him the law of love, the beauty of compassion. Just then something brushed against his foot; starting a little,

he looked down—then stooped and picked up the tiny mewing form of a shivering kitten. Poor thing, it was so cold, homeless, hungry; and the strong silent heart felt a strange surge of pity as Arthur Ainslie opened his coat and thrust the trembling little body—how gentle were his strong rough hands—close against his breast. The shuddering creature nestled towards his heart, so grateful was the sudden warmth; and he could feel the timid beating of its own. Yet he scarcely stopped, walking on beneath the frosty sky, the stern battle still ebbing and flowing in his soul. Once or twice he heard the faint mewing of the fondling he had taken to his bosom—and he laid his hand upon the outside of his coat, stroking it as a woman might have done.

V

THE VICTORY OF SURRENDER

IT was nearly half an hour later when he strode up, his head bowed low, to the cabin door. "Be quiet, Watch," he said sternly as he deposited the little kitten on the floor, for this had excited the dog. Then he struck a light in the darkness and in a moment the candle was struggling feebly with the gloom. He looked, and an expression of dismay broke from him. The chair was empty—and he started over as if to examine it. Then he saw, and his strong face softened at the sight, two forms on the rude lounge near the darkened hearth. Margaret was bended over her boy, her dishevelled hair still hanging about her; and the little fellow, oblivious to the cares that beat sleep back from older eyes, was deep in slumber on the pillow.

Once, and once only, her eyes were timidly lifted to his. They fell back, afraid to look again lest the warrant of her hope might be dispelled. But her bosom rose and fell in a way that betokened the new life that had sprung to being there. Still unspeaking, the man crossed the room to the lifeless

fireplace—no one need say that poetry has not its native home in just such hearts as these—and silently fell to work upon the wood and kindling that were lying near. A moment later the crackling of the new-born fire resounded through the room, and the cheery glow chased the shadows hither and thither in exultant glee. He swung the crane above the flame, the kettle suspended till it met the blaze.

"The laddie said he was hungry," were the only words that came from his lips; "wake him up—a wee bit at a time—an' I'll get him somethin' guid. Why, Margaret, what's the matter? What ails ye, Margaret?" his tone full of simple tenderness.

For the woman's head was bowed in a torrent of tears. Out they gushed, falling on the face of the sleeping boy till he stirred uneasily and lifted his hand to his cheek. For Margaret knew the nature of the man beside her well enough to recognize all he meant; the night was past, she knew; the spring had come—and the very caress of his words, the very sweetness of the thought that some one cared for her, after all the night of loneliness; the assurance that the battle in that great heart had issued in love and compassion for her—for fallen and helpless her—broke up the fountains of her soul.

"Oh, Uncle Arthur, yes," she sobbed incoherently;

"oh, yes, he's so hungry, Uncle Arthur—he said he was," taking the boy convulsively in her arms as she spoke, heedless of the rude awakening.

Without a word the man turned and went into the little pantry. In a minute or two he came back with such rude fare as his larder afforded, not untastefully arranged, and a little later the singing of the kettle announced that all was ready for the much-needed meal.

Sweet and rosy from its bath of slumber was the childish face; tender and brooding were the sad features of the woman who bended above him while he ate, herself with difficulty prevailed upon to take her share. And a little back in the shadow, the keen eyes fixed upon them both, sat Uncle Arthur. Noble resolve, and great peace, had their home within his eyes. It was the former that had given the latter birth, though he knew not nor cared. His mind was busy with the past; the sacred past, in which Margaret Menzies and her now sainted mother had filled nearly all his life. Those vagrant strands of hair, he thought, were the same that he had toyed with in the far-off days when no shade of care nor blight of cruelty nor stain of sin had left its mark on the happy face; those eyes, now so sobered with perplexity and sorrow, the same whose laughing love-light had sparkled in the long ago when they

all lived close together in the dear home beyond the sea.

But most of all were his eyes fixed upon the boy. Strong of frame and clean of limb; with a face marked by kindliness and intelligence, the deep eyes surmounted by a brow of unusual proportions; with keenness of mind and affectionateness of disposition already evident, there was something about the lad's whole make-up that warranted the assurance that this was a life with a future. The keenest observer, it is true, could not have told what was passing through the mind of Arthur Ainslie as he sat and looked so intently, but Margaret found herself hoping, with a great intensity of desire, that the boy might find favour in her uncle's eyes.

"We'll put him to bed, Margaret," he said a few minutes later, the boy's hunger satisfied at last; "the laddie's fair tired oot."

"Yes," she answered, still glancing shyly at him; "yes, he's tired out."

He rose, lighted another candle, stepped into one of the little side rooms that served as a sleeping chamber. Some few minutes were spent in preparation. "The bed's ready," he said as he returned; "come, laddie—gang wi' yir mither;" but as the last two words rose to his lips the storm gathered on his brow again, and Margaret shook like one of

the dead leaves drifting without the door, her voice going to pieces as she tried to tell her boy to follow her.

The struggle was soon over in the strong man's heart. "Bide a minute, Margaret," he said with the air of a conqueror; "we'll hae worship afore ye gang."

"Like we used to, uncle," she murmured, still half afraid, and as if fearful to trust her own voice.

"Yes, like we used to," he answered, his tone as composed as ever; "like we used to, Margaret," with which he stepped to the mantel and took the Book. "Wad ye like a psalm?" he asked, his face averted.

"We always used to," Margaret answered with downcast eyes.

"Ye'll hae to help me," he said simply; "I canna' sing like I used to. What yin wad ye like?"

Margaret took the old psalm-book from his hands. With sweet and serious mien—for she was unstained of soul—she turned it over, handing it back a moment later. "That one," she said in a whisper.

"I'll tak' the bass," said her uncle, his eyes softening almost to moistness as he marked the psalm she had selected; "we'll sing it low:

> "'After Thy lovingkindness, Lord
> Have mercy upon me;
> For Thy compassions great blot out
> All mine iniquity.'"

So ran the prayerful words. And so they sang, the strong man shading his eyes from the candle-light with his hand, the woman with hers cast down upon the floor, her soul leaping to her God the while; the boy stood in mute wonder, now glancing curiously at the man, now turning his gaze on the sweet face of his mother. And through it all the collie and the kitten slumbered peacefully by the hearth; through it all the towering trees and hills kept their still vigil beneath the wintry skies.

The prayer was short and simple, mostly composed of a fervid appeal that the Almighty would give strength to help them "do or bear all it seemed best to Him that they should bear or do," and closed with a plea for grace in the dying hour, as was the custom of all pious Scots. The old phraseology—but to-night it was touched with a new and glowing passion.

Margaret soon laid her charge to rest and in a few minutes was back again by the fire. Uncle Arthur had drawn an empty chair up close beside his own; she took it without a word and they sat long in silence.

By and by speech came. Little by little she entrusted him with the story of the past. He had a hundred questions to ask, about the old home, the old neighbours—but mostly of Margaret's mother, now sleeping beneath the sod in far-off Scotland.

And never a question did he put to her concerning what both knew was all the time nearest to their hearts and uppermost in their thoughts. It was she, and not without anguish never to be told, who slowly brought the subject round to that. . . .

"An' ye say ye've been livin' in England these last years?" he asked at length, turning and looking at her as the firelight fell on her burning face.

"Yes, uncle. I went there—went there, soon—soon after," she answered, her voice trembling.

"Aye, I understand," he responded calmly, "an' what for, micht I ask?"

Margaret Menzies was silent long. Then suddenly she half rose in her seat. "They were going to *church* me, uncle," she cried passionately at last, her eyes flashing, her bosom heaving. "They ordered me before the kirk—the session bade me appear before the congregation on the Sabbath day, and be publicly admonished," she exclaimed, her words on fire. "I saw it once," she went on excitedly; "I saw a poor woman once—and, and her child—before the people in the kirk. And I heard the minister rebuke her. So I wouldn't—I couldn't—and I ran away; I took Irwin and I went away—and I worked these two hands nearly to the bone," she exclaimed, holding them up before him,

while her voice trembled with anguish. "I toiled night and day for bread for us—till I fell sick, uncle—till I got afraid I'd die and leave him. So I came to you—I came to you, uncle—me and Irwin," her breath coming in little gusts as the passion of her soul leaped and glowed from the flashing eyes.

Gently he comforted her, his words coming as near to the affectionate as they ever can from such as he. Yet she might have seen, and trembled as she saw, the light of an inflexible purpose in the tender face. What that purpose was she was soon to know.

"An' that's what'll gi'e ye peace wi' God," he was saying a little later, as he stood above the poor crouching form in the chair. His voice was again as Scotch as though he had left the heathery hills but yesterday. A strange feature, this, about Arthur Ainslie. Although long absence from his native land had left his tongue with only a relic of its old-time Scottish speech, enough at any time to betray its source, yet whenever passion or deep feeling took possession of him his native dialect flowed as freely from his lips as ever in the days of youth.

"There's nae ither thing will gi'e ye peace wi' yir Maker," he went on solemnly, "but to own

up till yir sin afore a' the people; that's the way to confess Him afore men. I ken it's hard, Margaret. I ken it's hard, for the present—but the end is eternal life," he added earnestly. "Then ye'll hae begun richt—that's what we're tellt, aboot buildin' on the rock," he went on, nodding gravely —"the ither's on the sand—an' then ye'll hae yir new life afore ye, Margaret," he pleaded almost beseechingly, stooping now to touch with unfamiliar hand the rich tresses of the bended head.

"But, uncle," she pleaded, after much more had been said, after many a sobbing reply had been made, "it's for Irwin's sake I can't—it's because I love him so. For I do," she cried almost fiercely, "I do; even if, even if he is—oh, I cannot say it—but he's mine, he's mine—and I love him, I think, all the more for *that*," with which she rose and turned to the stern face before her, her arms outstretched wide, her quivering lips and look of untold yearning pouring forth their rich entreaty.

"I ken that," he answered calmly, his lips very white; "an' that's the verra reason—it's for the laddie's sake. What guid can ye hope for yir son so lang as there's a cloud betwixt his mother's heart an' God?" Then he gently drew her to the chair, pleading still.

And by and by a great stillness fell, the woman protesting now no more; she had yielded—and the stern reverent heart of the man lifted itself up in silent gratitude. For he thought he did God service.

When the silence was again broken, it was by Arthur Ainslie's voice. His words were meant to be comforting: "There's naethin' in life grander than this, Margaret, to redeem the past, wi' the help o' Almichty God; to tak' a life, ye ken, that's stained an' soiled, an' mak' it bricht an' bonnie again. Ye unnerstaun' me, Margaret?"

She nodded, silent still, gazing into the firelight.

"So, Margaret, if ye've wandered, ye ken—if ye've gone astray frae ——"

"I didn't," she broke out passionately, "that's always the way with the world—they lay it all at the woman's door. And the sin wasn't mine—it wasn't mostly mine," she amended, rising to her feet, her face aflame and her words coming hot. Even Arthur Ainslie marked the grace and beauty of the woman before him, the poise and dignity that passion and purity together can bestow. "If I sinned, my sin was in loving too well—in trusting too implicitly. And I could tell you—if I would—I could tell you what would ——"

Her resolve was quickly taken. Suddenly, after a

moment's struggle, she leaned over and whispered something in his ear.

"What's that ye're sayin'?" and his words came like the snapping of a trap, the voice rising almost to a cry; "here, d'ye say—here, in Canady—an' no' far frae us? Tell me, woman—tell me, in God's name," came almost in a voice of thunder as he sprang to his feet and seized both her wrists, peering into her face with eyes fixed and hot.

Again she hesitated. Then, the impulse overpowering her once more, she leaned forward till her lips were close to his ear. But something restrained her; her pale lips trembled, fixing themselves at last in rigid stillness. "I can't, Uncle Arthur," she faltered, her strength now spent and gone. "Oh, I can't, I mustn't—and I won't."

In vain he tried to prevail on her to speak the name, sometimes pleading, sometimes storming. The woman was immovable. "Wait till all love is dead," she said at last, the trembling mouth and overflowing eyes attesting the troubled heart.

"I'd kill him like a wild thing o' the woods," he cried, towering above her, the words beginning with a singsong tone, like some terrible weird chant, ending like some wind breaking in gust and storm through the trees of the forest. "I'd bid him mak' his peace wi' God—an' then I'd kill him where he

stood;" the sinewy arms, mighty from many a conflict with the stern foes of the wilderness, went up wildly above his head as he spoke; the veins stood out upon his brow like knotted cords; and the flame in his eyes was terrible to behold.

A moment later he sank into the chair beside him, his face behind his toil-worn hands, his body swaying slightly to and fro.

"God be mercifu' to me," he murmured, "for I'm a sinfu' man. Me! an elder in the church o' Christ —Him wha prayed for His enemies—an' gaein' doon the aisle wi' the flagon afore the folks; an' wi' murder in my heart! Oh, Margaret, yir uncle's a sinfu' man," his voice eloquent of distress; "expectin' forgiveness frae his Maker—an' hatin' his brither man."

They sat long in silence, Margaret having no word to speak. Nothing could be heard but the ticking of the solemn-visaged clock against the wall. She felt, instinctively, that her uncle was almost oblivious to his surroundings, engaged alone with that Presence whose daily influence was the greatest of his life. He was fighting again—the old, old struggle with his insurgent heart.

"We'll gang to oor rest," he suddenly exclaimed, lifting his head and rising to his feet; "d'ye ken what time it is?" glancing as he spoke towards the

old-fashioned clock; "it's frae auld Scotland," denoting the timepiece by a nod in its direction, "an' mony a weary hour it's put by for me—but thae lonely days is past, please God," motioning Margaret towards her room.

The night was far spent, and Margaret had been asleep for more than an hour, when she stirred and gently wakened. A tall form was beside the bed, and the man's hand was shading the candle-light from her face as he looked intently down.

"What is it, Uncle Arthur?" she murmured wearily, for grief and fatigue had made her slumber deep; "did he cry?"

"Na, na," and even in her semi-consciousness she noted the quiver in his voice; "na, na, he didna' cry—but I was thinkin' he's wonderfu' like yir mither, Margaret. I thocht that a' the time—but ye canna' tell wha a bairn's like till ye see them sleepin'. Aye, he minds me o' Janet—my sister Janet, her that bides wi' God," and he looked once again with a fondness that would have gone far to comfort Margaret's aching heart, could she have seen his face. Then he turned and went slowly from the room.

The weary exile had hardly sunk again to slumber before the form reappeared; this time the candle stood on an adjoining chair. "I was thinkin' ye'd

be fair done oot, Margaret," he half whispered in rather an embarrassed tone—" an' I want ye to let the bairn sleep wi' me," stooping to take the boy in his outstretching arms. " Ye'll sleep better by yirsel', I'm thinkin'—an' ye need yir rest. We'll no' mak' a habit o' 't," he added half apologetically as he raised the sleeping boy—" but just for the nicht, ye ken."

And Margaret Menzies fell again on sleep, thanking God.

VI

"KINGS MAY BE BLEST, BUT——"

THERE were several topics of conversation on this particular night within the hospitable precincts of "The Buck," and each seemed more absorbing than the other. It was noticeable, moreover, that the interest seemed to deepen as the hours waned; and by the time Dinny had responded to the somewhat repeated demands of his guests the opinions had grown more oracular, the human feeling more intense.

"Yes," Judd was saying, "a woman's place is at home. That's what I tell my wife when she wants to go out shopping Saturday nights—one of the kids always wants a new pair o' boots every Saturday night; darned if I don't wish they were all born iron-shod—an' that's what I say to the wife's mother, too, when she talks of comin' over to visit us. A woman ain't long runnin' the streets till she gets bold like; an' when a woman once gets——"

"That's what I say," broke in a rather drouthy-looking swain, leaning far over the narrow bar, "regardin'—regardin'—what were we talkin' about,

Judd? No, thank'ee, Mr. Muir," addressing a very Scottish-looking man with a long gray beard, evidently the author of the present treat, "I won't take any more o' the kettle, thank'ee—hot water always gives my insides a kind of a shock; got scalded once when I was a kid—but I *will* take a little more o' that there black bottle," nodding towards the same, and including Dinny in the nod. The glance, by the way, was rather watery and confused, and the articulation just thick enough to indicate that he had so far escaped the hot water tolerably well.

"Mr. Muir's right," answered Judd irrelevantly, with a respectful jerk of the head towards their benefactor; "there ain't nothin' would do your insides as much good, right now, as that there kettle; you've had plenty o' the other, Tim. We ain't a-goin' to take you home on a stoneboat *every* night," he threatened, referring ruefully to previous deliveries; "you'll have to walk like other folks—an' you're pretty near past that now."

"Hate hot water," muttered Tim; "kept this here joint for years myself—an' hot water ain't no friend o' the tavern-keeper. Anyhow, I got scalded when I was a kid. What were we debatin', Judd?" he pursued. "I had a—a idea on it, I think."

"I guess it got lonely, Tim, an' cut out," said Judd with a grin; "no, thank you, Mr. Muir," wav-

ing aside the proffered vessel—"there ain't no hog about me," with a sidelong glance at Tim. "We was debatin' how a woman's place is in the home, if you really want to know," he concluded, rising to take a chair nearer the fireplace; for such, in those primitive days, was still the romantic mode by which even the public houses were kept in warmth.

"Oh, yes," responded Tim, delighted to find his feet on the path again, "yes, an' you were sayin' a woman gets bold, owdacious like, when she gets runnin' out like that. That's what I say to my girl Sophia—she prayed at meetin' once—an' I soon stopped that, mind ye. She's terrible religious, is Sophia—has the Bible all off by heart, an' sings hymns in her sleep—but I soon stopped that prayin'-out-loud business. 'We'll soon have her prayin' all round the place,' says I to her mother, 'if this thing goes on.' Anyhow, a woman's place is to keep her mouth shut—she promises to do that when she gets married," concluded Tim sagaciously, blinking in a very kindly fashion towards Mr. Muir, although shuddering a little as he noticed the old gentleman help himself to some more of the hot water.

"She don't do nothin' o' the sort," corrected Judd.

"Certain sure she does," retorted Tim, trying to turn sufficiently in his chair to look at his crony, but getting no further than the neighbourhood of his right

hand, the one that held the liquid Tim hoped soon to hold. "I got married myself once, an' I ought to know—an' so did Sophia's mother; me an' my wife both got married the same time," he mumbled, struggling to recall the date.

"You're off your base," responded Judd, contemptuously; "it's love, honour and obey she promises, everybody knows that."

"That's what I said," Tim responded in a maudlin voice; "same thing—if they love you, they'll be willin' to keep their mouths shut; an' if they'd obey, they'd have to," as he did his best to wink triumphantly towards Mr. Muir.

This latter worthy evidently thought it time his voice should be heard. Probably the recollection that but for his generosity the hot water would have had no redeeming fluid confirmed him not a little in this opinion. "If you're wanting my view on the matter," he began slowly, almost reproachfully—"I'll give it."

"That's why we asked you," said Judd obsequiously, glancing gratefully, and not unexpectantly, in the direction of the black bottle.

"Sure, that's why we left the argyment to you," ably seconded poor Tim, struggling hard to keep awake, and staring frankly where Judd had only dared to glance.

"Well," began Mr. Muir, quite mollified by this, "in regards to what Tim there said—about prayin' at a meetin'—I settle it this way; what's the use o' payin' a minister to do all those things, and then doin' them yourself?" With which interrogation, so vastly was he impressed by it, Mr. Muir slipped off his stool and abstractedly took hold of the still heated kettle. In a moment, of course, he saw his mistake and nodded to Dinny for the other receptacle, the one that had attracted Tim's somnolent eye. As for Tim, beholding this, he forthwith stood straight up—with variations—prepared to run all risks that Mr. Muir himself might undergo. "Yes," emphasized Mr. Muir, the receptacle now in his hand, "that's what we pay Dr. Leitch his stipend for. Of course," he went on patronizingly, "I don't know how it is with the sects—you're a Methody, ain't you, Tim?" this last in a tone that implied the worst—"but in our church we'd think it bad business, to pay a man and then do it yourself. Besides," he enlarged, his face showing that he had struck a more serious consideration, "it isn't respectful; it isn't respectful to the minister, I say—an', what's more, I'm not so sure that it's honourable. No, by Jove," he went on, his conviction gaining on reflection, "I'll go further and say it *isn't* honourable. And I believe Dr. Leitch would bear me out—yes,

would bear me out. Here, Judd, fill her up again—Tim's asleep, I think," as he glanced at the latter, by this time more nearly horizontal than perpendicular, himself quite indifferent which.

But Tim had suddenly revived; the invitation just extended to Judd had made a new man of him. "Yes, Judd," he mumbled in a brotherly sort of way, "fill her up, my boy—Mr. Muir said so—an' so will I, an' so will he—we all will. I'll take the same, Dinny," smiling amiably at their Irish host.

"Ye won't—ye'll take the door," said Dinny, his arms akimbo.

"I'll take what?" gasped Tim, incredulous.

"Ye'll take the door," said Dinny—"sure it's the road for *you*. My father kep' 'The Black Bull' in Kilkarty for thirty year, an' he niver gave a dhrop to a man that couldn't carry it. An' that's what I want to have said about 'The Buck'—long after I'm playin' on me golden harp," concluded Dinny, looking piously towards the roof of his humble tavern; "so there isn't anny more for ye this night, Timmie," as he placed the bottle far back on the shelf behind him.

But further progress towards dismissal was suddenly arrested by the ingenuity of Judd, who knew the peril of such a precedent; and, not at all inclined to have the genial session thus concluded, he gave

the conversation so interesting a turn that possession was again secure for an indefinite time.

"Speakin' of Dr. Leitch," he began, reverting to Mr. Muir's reference to him, "speakin' of Dr. Leitch, Mr. Muir, they tell me—pass the sugar, Dinny, if you please—they tell me he's got a nice job on his hands for next Sunday. Is that so, Mr. Muir?"

"Next Sabbath, you mean," corrected Mr. Muir; "that word Sunday always rubs me the wrong way—wasn't brought up on it. My father always fetched us one or two alongside the head if we called it anything but the Sabbath. He was a very godly man, my father was—used to have family worship every time he seen a Bible. What were you speakin' about, Judd?" he concluded, dropping again into a worldly tone. Judd was not in the least disconcerted, for this was a well-known scruple of Mr. Muir's; and the remarkable thing about it was, that the longer he tarried within the genial precincts of "The Buck" and the better he improved the time while there, the more fastidious became his conscience on this very point. What was Sunday when he entered was usually the Lord's Day before he departed, especially if that departure was not without friendly aid. But this is characteristic of many Scotchmen and their descendants; their dormant piety wakens to its full strength under influences

such as these—and the further they drift from the morality of their fathers, the more pugnaciously do they cleave to their theology.

"Yes, I meant the Sabbath," amended Judd, gulping a little at the word, yet mindful of past favours and not without hope of more; "they tell me he's goin' to read the riot act to that there woman next Sunday morning—that is, at church next Sabbath," as Mr. Muir suddenly turned and looked at him rather sharply.

"That isn't a very proper way to refer to it, Judd," said the older man reproachfully, "calling it a name like that. It's a public rebuke Dr. Leitch is going to give, Judd—an admonition, I might say. I'm one o' the elders, an' I ought to know. It's just what the good Book says: 'Your sin will find you out'—that's in the Bible, you know, Judd," looking at him, nevertheless, as though he had serious doubts as to whether he knew or not.

"Oh, yes," Judd answered a little impatiently, "of course everybody knows that. It's the same meanin' as 'murder will out'; that's in the Bible too—Proverbs, I think."

"Is that there last one in Proverbs?" inquired Mr. Muir, shaking his head a little doubtfully as he set his glass down on the table by his side. "I knew it was in the Bible, of course, but it never struck me it was

in Proverbs. Sure, Judd?" leaning back in his chair and looking reflectively at the ceiling. "My father could ha' told as quick as he could tell his own name. I mind once when Dr. Leitch lost his text—he had took too much snuff while the psalm was singin', an' ——"

"Certain sure," interrupted Judd, in no mood for further saintly reminiscences; "well, anyhow, he's goin' to give that there woman a settin' out at church, ain't he?" anxious to proceed with the subject in hand.

"What woman is this you're talkin' about?" broke in Tim, anxious to show that he was still capable of following the conversation; "let us know what we're discussin' about before we begin," nodding towards Dinny to emphasize the importance of his point.

"It's that there woman you made me stop an' take into the sleigh, the day she first came to Glen Ridge. Don't you mind how mad I got?" answered Judd, completely ignoring Tim and directing his words to Dinny. The latter was listening with marked intentness.

"Yes, I know," he answered briefly; "she had a broth of a boy wid her—what's this ye say they're goin' to do to her?" and Dinny's face was quite a study as he leaned over waiting for an answer.

"Oh, she's got to walk the plank; she's got to stand up an' take it, afore the congregation," Judd

informed him. "Dr. Leitch, he's goin' to put her through the mill—I bet he hates it, too. But it's an old custom, I hear, among the Scotch folks—the religious ones, leastways."

"What for?" Dinny asked, breathless.

"Oh, well, you know—for the kid, I guess."

"It's a lie!" said Dinny. "Dr. Leitch is too good a Christian for the likes o' that; he'd see them all to ——— before he'd do annything like that to a poor cratur' that's down, or else I don't know the man. It's time for lockin' up, boys," as he began vigorously wiping up the bar and putting things to rights. "An' the man that says Dr. Leitch would do annything like that—he's a liar," Dinny added savagely, flinging his cloth at a neighbouring shelf as he spoke.

"I'm afraid you're mistaken, Mr. Riley," came Mr. Muir's calm voice; "the Doctor has to carry out the rules of the church. And that's one of them—although it's many a year since anything of the kind has happened here. But the session said it should be done—and her own uncle was one of them; Arthur Ainslie, you know—he's her uncle."

"Yes, I know," said Dinny; his voice sounded far away, and the expression on his face was a very troubled one. "An' what right has Dr. Leitch—or anny other livin' man—what right has he to give a tongue-lashin' to that Menzies woman? or anny other

woman, that's what I want to know?" and Dinny paused as he tapped down the lid on the rather decrepit cigar-box that held the cash.

"He's the minister," replied Mr. Muir, his tone one of reverence.

"Supposin' so—he ain't God," retorted Dinny, reaching for a candle, final signal for closing down.

"An' the woman—she sinned," added Mr. Muir, shaking his head in a very Presbyterian way.

"So did he," came from Dinny quick as a flash. Tim pulled himself together at this, as at something he could not afford to lose.

"What's that?" demanded Mr. Muir sharply; "do you know who you're talking about, Mr. Riley? Do you know you're laying a charge at the door of our minister—and me one of his elders?" with which Mr. Muir rose to a standing position, not without some difficulty, it must be admitted. "You're laying hands on the Lord's anointed, Mr. Riley," and the elder looked at the Irishman as if he expected to see him stricken down where he stood.

"I'm not makin' anny charge," Dinny retorted, doubtless despairing of making his real meaning known, "but I'm sayin' that, if the truth was told, there'd be just as many women rebukin' the ministers as ministers rebukin' them. Who is Dr. Leitch, —or anny other Doctor—to stan' up an' lambaste

anny poor sinner? Ain't he—ain't all o' them—just sinful craturs like ourselves? An' I won't go to the church," Dinny concluded, "if there's anny funny business like that goin' on—sure, I'll go to some other church where they let Almighty God do His own judgin', an' not try to help Him out like these Scotchmen here think they have to do. What is it, Nora—what d'ye want, my darlint?"

This unexpected question was provoked by the sudden appearance, standing at the door of the little room, of his daughter, her face showing the embarrassment she felt as the men turned and fixed their eyes on her. It was not to be wondered at, for Nora Riley was growing into a beautiful girl. The rich complexion, so often the dower of Erin's daughters, appeared all the more beautiful because of the wealth of hair, raven black, that crowned the shapely head. She had evidently been all but ready for retiring, some loose garment thrown about her; and the flowing tresses floated about the full, white neck, and fell over her shoulders till they came even with her waist. Large and lustrous eyes, wonderfully touched by the light of innocence and purity—especially when it is remembered amid what circumstances her lot was cast—looked out lovingly and confidingly at her father behind the bar. The thin and mobile lips were suggestive of a refined and del-

icate nature, the whole countenance fresh and sweet; and, as Dinny's eyes fondled her in the dim candle-light, the memory of her mother's face surged about his heart.

"What is it, darlint?" he asked again.

"Dr. Leitch is here, father—he came to the side door—and he asked me to tell you." Then she moved across the room to her father; evidently there was something she did not wish the others to hear.

Judd was lolling against the bar as she came up; "Confoundedly pretty hair," he said with a laugh; "pretty chin, too," as he tilted the face up a little with his hand; "guess your mother must 'a' been a beauty—you never got it from your dad." The girl flushed crimson and sprung aside, beckoning her father to the end of the counter. He followed, but as he made his way his eyes, ablaze, were fixed on Judd, the latter quite oblivious.

Nora put her lips to her father's ear. "Dr. Leitch said he came to take Tim home—Tim's wife asked him to."

Dinny's face looked troubled; this was a feature of his business quite unfamiliar, altogether below the high standard of "The Black Bull" in Kilkarty.

"Where is he?" said Dinny.

"Right there—he's out in the hall, waiting."

"Then why doesn't he come in?" Dinny mut-

tered, a little impatiently. "Nobody'll hurt him—I've seen all the clargy in Kilkarty," he murmured reminiscently, the rest lost in silence. "Dr. Leitch," he called—"are ye there, Doctor?"

"Yes, Dinny, I'm here—I'm waiting to see a mutual friend," responded a rich voice from the hall; any who heard the words could have told the Doctor was smiling as he spoke. He was wont to say there was no occasion too solemn for a smile—look on the face of the blessed dead, he used to tell the cavillers.

"Then come in, Doctor—come away in, an' welcome. Sure there's two or three o' the mutuals here, as ye call 'em."

Dinny's last words ended in a chuckle. For the sound of the Doctor's voice from without had an effect on the startled guests that Dinny was not slow to notice. Such a straightening up, and wiping of moist lips, and dusting of ashy waistcoats, and general setting of things to right as was refreshing to behold! Judd, with the impulse of genius, reached for an aged copy of the weekly paper that was lying on the window sill beside him and gave himself up with new-born zeal to the pursuit of knowledge, his back turned full on the bar as though he had renounced the devil and all his works. Tim, hardly less inspired, seized Mr. Muir's hat and stick from their place on the floor and took his stand in front

of their owner, holding his possessions out before him as though beseeching the elder to depart.

But Mr. Muir's was the most masterly bearing of them all. With such speed as his previous potations would permit, he possessed himself of the kettle and began pouring its contents into the glass beside him, to the sad surprise, there can be little doubt, of the fluid already reposing there, unaccustomed as it was to such copious interruption. And there stole over Mr. Muir's countenance, at the behest of a very Presbyterian will, a look of sanctity and grace that was usually kept in strict reserve for the Sabbath day and for that alone.

"Yes," he began solemnly as the Doctor's huge form came slowly in the door; "yes, I may be mistaken—no man's perfect in this world; they're lifeless that's faultless, as my father used to say—he's in glory now"—Mr. Muir's eyes were lifted towards the rafters of the little house—"I may be mistaken, but if a man wants to keep his stomach—and his whole insides—in the state o' perfection his Maker intended them to be, there's nothing as good for him as sipping hot water—a little at a time; moderation in all things—as my father said once when they asked him to increase his subscription to the church," sipping delicately as he spoke and trying hard to smack his lips thereafter, though the poor decoction

was as dish-water to his soul; "and before you know it, this here same hot water grows sweet to the taste, sweeter than honey and the honeycomb, as the Psalmist puts it. Why, bless my heart, is that you, Dr. Leitch?" with a nobly executed start of surprise; "come in, come on in and sit down—well now, who'd have thought to see the Moderator here this time o' night? Sit down, Doctor, sit down—won't you have a little hot water along with me? Fetch another glass, Mr. Riley," he enjoined, his hand upon the kettle.

"Never mind, Mr. Muir, never mind," responded the Doctor genially; "I'm only going to stay a minute—I came to get a friend. No, thank you, Dinny," waving his dissent towards the willing landlord, "don't bother about me; I'm not much on hot water. I'll just take a sip of the elder's here," with which, and all oblivious of the dismay and alarm on the elder's face, he took the glass from his hand and lifted it to his lips.

Then he laid it down. His lips moved reflectively once or twice, as if a little puzzled. A queer smile was on his face. "That must be some kind of mineral water, Mr. Muir?" he said, commanding perfect gravity.

"Not—not that I know of," stammered Mr. Muir, seizing the candle with eager hand and holding the

glass between him and the light. "Mr. Riley, is there anything in this water, sir?" he demanded sternly, as though his life had been attempted.

"I think there is," said Dinny, preternaturally grave.

"I mean," corrected Mr. Muir, regretting the line of inquiry, "I mean, is this mineral water, sir?"

"No, sir, that watter isn't annything but watter, sir—sure, an' p'r'aps it's the company it's in?"

Which suggestion Mr. Muir treated with the scorn it deserved. "I have it, Doctor," he suddenly exclaimed, his face triumphant; "it's this brass kettle here," holding it aloft as he spoke; "that's what gives it that peculiar flavour, Doctor; what they call a—a metallic taste, I think. Yes, that's it, a metallic taste, Dr. Leitch—now that you speak of it, I thought I noticed it myself."

"Dinny," said Dr. Leitch solemnly, "I hope you'll see this kettle is thoroughly rinsed out."

"Yes, sir," said the Irishman, "I'm thinkin' it needs lookin' after. But to tell ye the truth, Doctor, there ain't anny call for it, to speak of, only when ye come around yerself, Doctor. Mr. Muir mightn't be needin' it anny more for a long time, Doctor—an' that's the truth I'm tellin' ye."

It is doubtful if the minister heard Dinny's last remark. For Tim's efforts were now engaging his atten-

tion. "Come, Mr. Muir," Tim was urging, his tone full of pleading, "I can't wait all night for you. Sure I've waited too long on you now. I passed my word to your wife I wouldn't leave you till I got you home—if it wasn't for that, I'd be havin' my beauty sleep right now."

"What's that you're saying, man?" demanded Mr. Muir indignantly.

"You'll have to help me, Dr. Leitch," Tim appealed despairingly; "I can't do nothin' with him—he'll go with *you*, I know he will. Here, Doctor, you put it on him," handing the elder's hat to the Doctor as he spoke. "It went on easy enough when he came in—but it'll likely be tight for him now."

This was too much for Mr. Muir. "Outrageous!" he snorted, standing erect, by degrees; "perfectly outrageous—talking to me, an elder of the kirk, like this—and in the presence of the Moderator, too. What do you mean, sir?—I demand an explanation. You seem to think there's something wrong with me. What is your meaning, sir—what do you think ails me? I have a right to know, sir," and the elder glared at him from above.

"Too much hot water," said Tim, sententiously. "Come now, Mr. Muir—come with Dr. Leitch—you know you promised me an hour ago."

The elder was about to deliver a remarkable reply.

But it never came. "Tim," said Dr. Leitch in a tone of authority, "I think I left my umbrella out on the porch. Go and get it for me, please." Tim disappeared.

Then the Doctor drew his colleague aside. "Mr. Muir," he began amiably, "I want your help—I want you to help me to get Tim home. That's what I came for."

"I knew it," almost roared Mr. Muir. "That's what I wanted to tell him, if I'd had a chance. I've been coaxing him to come for the last two hours—but I could do nothing with the man. Yes, I'll take him, Doctor—I didn't feel it was right for me to leave him here; you see, his wife kind of counts on me to get him home. Here, Tim," as the latter appeared with the umbrella—"no, not a word now—not a word. Come, Tim, come."

"Thank you, Doctor," Tim whispered gratefully; "it's you we've got to thank for this—no, thank you, I don't think I'll have any more trouble with him now. He's all right after you once get him started."

"I'm going that way anyhow," replied the Doctor, following fast. "Come, Judd—we all go the same road, don't we?"

"I want to speak to Judd a minute, Doctor, if ye don't mind," said Dinny, and his lips were pale. "I'll send him after ye in a jiffy, Doctor."

"All right, Dinny; good-night," said the Doctor as he disappeared.

Dinny did not answer. He was too absorbed. Crossing a narrow hall, he stole a quick glance at the girlish figure, by this time sound asleep upon her pillow. Then he came back and closed the barroom door.

"Judd," he said, his face ghostly white, "there's two things goin' to be different here. There ain't goin' to be annybody comin' to take annybody home. That ain't the kind of a place my father kept—an' it ain't the kind of a place I'm goin' to keep. Only it wasn't my fault. An' there's another thing, Judd—d'ye know what it is?" coming closer as he put the question.

"No, can't say I do," said Judd.

"Then I'll tell ye," the words coming out like fire as Dinny clutched the gasping man by the throat and pinned him to the wall. "I could forgive ye if it was the dhrink that did it—but it was little o' that ye had. Ye touched that girl o' mine, damn ye—ye laid yer dirty paws on her—ye touched her hair, an' her cheek. An' if ye do it again—I'll kill ye. I'll kill ye, mind—or if ye ever soil her mother's name wid yer unclean lips, I'll—I'll twist yer neck like a sparrow's. Say ye won't—say it quick, or I'll ——"

"For God's sake, don't, Dinny—oh, for God's sake, let me go," gasped the trembling Judd, already growing black in the face. "I won't—no, I won't, Dinny—I didn't mean anything, Dinny; I was only jokin', so help me——"

"It'll be a grim joke for ye, if ye try it anny more," muttered Dinny, relaxing his grip and turning to open the door. "There—go, I tell ye."

Judd went. And Dinny, as he moved about arranging the somewhat dishevelled room, might have been heard murmuring to himself: "She hasn't anny mother, poor darlint—she hasn't anny mother."

VII

THE COMPASSION OF THE PURE

"AYE, it's uncommon satisfyin'," Arthur Ainslie was saying as he stood in the twilight and waved his hand towards the broad forest, its dear-bought clearances showing here and there; "it's uncommon satisfyin' to think every year gi'es us a wee bit mair o' land that's guid for something. An' it's oor ain—that's the glory o' 't. It's no' like it used to be in auld Scotland—nae matter how ye toiled an' slaved, some graun' nobleman and his idle bairns was gettin' the guid o' 't. Aye, it's bonnie to see the place growin' afore yir eyes—the wilderness blossomin' like the rose," he added reverently, the familiar words of the Book coming easily to his lips.

"There's a great charm about growth, and development—no doubt of that, Arthur," answered his minister. For Dr. Leitch had now known his trusty elder for years; and friendship ripens fast amid such surroundings as those of the early pioneers. "It thrills me, often, when I try to realize all that future generations will possess, these spreading acres, these rich and fertile farms that are yet

to be. But that isn't what I wanted to speak about," he suddenly digressed, turning round and looking his elder squarely in the face. "I wanted to speak of—of your niece, Miss Menzies. It was to see her I came out to-night. I wanted to speak to her, alone."

"She's in the hoose, yonder," said Arthur Ainslie, his face saddening as he nodded towards the cabin a little distance from them; yet his lips closed tightly together as he spoke, stern resolution written on every feature. "Gang on in, sir, an' ye'll find her there."

"I shrink from this thing more than I can tell," the minister began, making no movement to obey. "It's the hardest duty, I think, that has come to me in my ministry."

"What might ye be referrin' to, Doctor?" inquired his elder, though his face indicated how unnecessary was the question.

"You know, Arthur. This public rebuke—this that I've got to say to her on Sabbath morning. I only did it once before—and it nearly killed me. Never saw it, or heard it, but twice in my life, thank God—and that was in Scotland. And my very soul shrinks from it."

"Duty's a sacred word, sir," said the stern man beside him.

"If I only felt sure that it is a duty," protested Dr. Leitch, coming closer to the other. "I'm not so sure but we're all wrong about it. Of course, I know all about her leaving Scotland on that account. And I know the session has ordered it—I do not doubt their sincerity of purpose—but I can't help wondering if any living man has a right to speak to a fellow creature that way. Who am I, who are you—who is any of us," he went on with heightening passion, "that is pure enough of heart, or holy enough of life, to pronounce judgment on a fellow sinner? Tell me, do you know of one?" peering into the immobile face as he put the question.

"Ye're no' pronouncin' yir ain judgment," answered the other resolutely; "ye're speakin' in yir Master's name."

"That's it," cried the minister, "that's it exactly—we speak in the name of the Saviour, the meek and gentle Redeemer—and nearly always in the spirit of censure and self-righteousness, as if we were without sin ourselves. And if we're not any better, not any better than those we censure," and his lips were white and set—"if we're not that, the whole thing's a sham. And if we are—if we are truly good, we couldn't. The more we're like the Master, the harder we'd find it to open our lips to utter a single

word," and the face that was fixed on the Scotchman before him was fairly rigid in its intensity.

"Div ye no' intend to carry oot the will o' the kirk session?" was Arthur Ainslie's answer.

"Yes," said the minister slowly; "yes, I'll try to do my duty—if it *is* a duty. But God knows I feel a thousand times more humbled by it than any one else can be. And that's what I wanted to speak to her about—I wanted her to know there's one heart feels for her more than can be told."

"Ye'll find her in the hoose," said the elder.

The minister turned and slowly made his way in the direction indicated. Knocking gently, and without pausing for an answer, he lifted the latch and walked in. Before the deepening dusk permitted him to distinguish anything or anybody, a timid voice gave him chastened greeting; and in a few minutes he was seated beside the woman he had come to see. Her child was close beside her, subdued and silent; doubtless the cloud that overhung his mother's heart, with that quickness of sympathy that belongs to childhood, had extended its shadow to his own.

A few minutes went by in ordinary conversation, though both knew what was engrossing the other's thought. Suddenly the minister broke out with what was on his heart.

"I wanted to tell you," he began, "about how—about how I feel for you—regarding what has to be done—what has to be done next Sabbath."

Margaret Menzies spoke never a word. Her boy was standing by her chair, and one hand was toying with his locks. She drew him closer to her.

"It's through no wish of mine," the minister went on, and the pain in his voice was noticeable even to her; "I would wish it otherwise; but it seems, since you—since you evaded that discipline in Scotland—as they call it," evidently wincing at the word, "it has to be gone through with here—that is, to remain in communion with the church. And you wish that, of course, do you not—you wish still to be connected with the church?"

She raised her head perceptibly. "Yes," she said, almost inaudibly, "yes, I wish to."

"And I hope—I hope you don't feel too oppressed about it," the gentle voice went on, as he drew his chair closer to hers. "I can't tell you how my heart bleeds for you—how I'm thinking of you and praying for you, almost night and day," the words coming rather brokenly as his hand went out in the gloom and sought her own.

"I'm broken-hearted," she faltered—"but it's just; it's just and right—and I'm willing to bear it. I hope I have peace with God," she went on, her eyes

cast down upon the floor, her voice trembling so that she could hardly speak. "And I know you'll not be hard on me, sir?" the tone full of wistful pleading as she turned her eyes up to the pure face above her.

This was too much for this minister of God. He arose, a kind of half sob breaking from him, and stood beside her chair, his great form bending low that his whisper might be heard. "Oh, dear friend," he began passionately, "if I could only tell you all that's in my heart! If you only knew how it overflows with pity—and sympathy—and love! And how I want to tell you that I know I'm not worthy —not worthy to speak one word to you of chiding or rebuke. Oh, Margaret," he went on, reckless of proprieties, his soul aflame, "any life may stray, any foot may slip. I know men who stand in the pulpit, who minister at God's altar—and they carry about with them a memory just as bitter, an anguish just as deep as yours. But they have sought and found forgiveness—they know the secret of Redeeming Grace. And that's what gives them their power, Margaret—that's what makes their pulpits like golden fountains where the weary and the sinful drink and are refreshed."

The woman looked up at him; and even in the dim light he could see the pallor and the wonder of

her startled face. "Oh, sir," she said, gazing awesomely, even reverently at him, "do you really think so? Do you really think God takes a life, and makes it really pure and beautiful, when once it's been stained and broken—like mine?" she added, the words full of bitter pain.

He bended lower. "Margaret," he said, the words seeming to fall like music on her heart, "shall I tell you—would it comfort you, I wonder, if I told you—about—about ——" and then the voice fell to such a gentle whisper that the woman herself could scarcely hear. She listened like one dead.

Only a few words he spoke, but they were alive with the passion of tenderness and humility and love —and a great hope surged through them all, as the ocean surges on the shore. Then he lifted his head, his hand still holding hers, and not a sound could be heard but the steady ticking of the old clock above the mantel. A moment later, without word or signal, he sank to his knees in prayer; the woman, silent, knelt beside him—the boy, wondering, stood wtih his eyes fixed on them both.

A few minutes later he was gone, out into the gathering night, his eyes moist, his lips moving, his face turned to the slowly-appearing stars. And Margaret Menzies, worshipful, lost in wonder and devotion, gathered her child to her bosom and committed

herself anew to that Infinite Compassion that was nearer and dearer to her now than it had ever been before. Again the darkness wrapped the bare outline of the little house; again the whispering wind felt its way through the surrounding forest—but God had spoken to her soul and the light of Hope put the darkness of the night to shame.

The minister's horse was neighing impatiently as its rider came out, stamping its foot when that rider paused, musing, half-way between the house and the barn. And all the way back to Glen Ridge the restive creature kept champing at the bit, its arched neck and mincing pace showing how ill it brooked the ignoble gait that seemed to suit its master's mood. But Dr. Leitch's hand was firm on the bridle rein; one or two who passed him on the road remarked how like a king he sat his horse—for the whole countryside was proud of their equestrian minister, unsurpassed far and wide for skill and daring—but they little knew what tumult reigned beneath the flowing cloak whose ample folds were known and loved for miles around. They knew as little of this as they did of all his hidden life—all the close-guarded secret of the gentle sympathy, the simple purity, the deep and silent peace that had been born of bitter storm and conflict.

Long that night the minister sat in his study, his

devoted housekeeper stirring in her sleep and muttering at the master's strange delay, for she could catch the beams of light as they struggled up the winding stair. It was after midnight, but still he sat, gazing into the dying fire on the hearth. Often, too, he knelt; once he arose and went over to the desk in the corner of the room, his keys in his hand. But he shook his head sadly, put the keys in his pocket, turned and sat down again before the fire.

VIII

The "CHURCHING" of MARGARET MENZIES

SABBATH morning slumbering had not yet become the fashion in Glen Ridge. One of the fixed opinions of the good Canadian pioneers was that encroachment on the hours of the Lord's Day through indolence, was just as sinful as through any other indulgence of the flesh ; wherefore the early dawn found them as usual about their tasks, confined though they were on the first day of the week to those of necessity and mercy.

But on this particular Sabbath morning there was little inclination to slumber, even among the most lax and liberal. For the hearts of all Glen Ridge, and of all the countryside, were turned this morning towards the House of Prayer and the more than usually solemn exercises to which they were looking forward. Even on ordinary occasions these solemnities were the chief feature of their uneventful lives. More than we of a later and busier age—a more material too—can understand, their simple natures found in the church of God the deepest expression of their in-

ward life, the separate luxury of their forewandering hearts.

Long before the hour appointed for the beginning of the service, the more grave and reverential were wont to wend their way to the plain and unpretentious structure which served as their place of worship. Seeking their accustomed seats—great roomy pews, with doors that shut the worshippers in when securely clasped by the head of the house, whose place was always at the end—they sat in meditative silence till the advent of the minister announced that the solemn exercises were about to be begun. There they sat; sometimes gazing about the roomy structure, with its pulpit perched aloft, its box below from which the precentor led the swelling psalm, its two roomy aisles, its shapely tower from whose base the beadle flung out, over hill and dale and forest, the sweet grave tones of the bell that from the earliest days had summoned the rude worshippers to the place of prayer; sometimes with bowed heads and reflective air; sometimes turning the pages of the Bible or Psalm-book, preparatory to the real business of the hour.

On this particular Sabbath morning the church was crowded to the very doors long before the hour at which the service was to begin. It was well known what was to transpire there that day—Margaret

Menzies was to be summoned before the gathered congregation, to be publicly rebuked in the face of men and angels. Many were the muffled sighs, many the sober head-shakings among the older members of the congregation; many a prayer of gratitude ascended from one and another of the matronly hearts, silently rendering thanks for the unstained youthful lives in the pews beside them.

The church was almost full, when, disturbing the holy stillness, a noticeable flutter went over the congregation. Yet it lasted but a moment, succeeded by a solemn hush, nearly all heads bended low, all eyes turned aside in sympathy; even a smothered sob could be heard in one or two quarters of the church. With uncertain footsteps, trembling, yet sweet and winsome as ever, her downcast eyes never lifted from the floor, her hot cheeks attesting the anguish that wrung her soul, her lips moving slightly as if in prayer, Margaret Menzies passed down the aisle of the crowded church. Onward to the front seat she passed, looking not to right or left. And beside her, a little behind, his hand trying to hold her arm as she moved on before him, came Arthur Ainslie; his face, solemn as none had ever seen it before, yet almost distorted in its pain, showed that he felt the sore ordeal to be such as did God service, even though his whole soul was evidently

outpoured in sympathy with the unhappy woman at his side. And just between them, his hand clasped in his mother's, a bright smile on the boyish face as he looked this way and that, lagging curiously as he tried to take in the unfamiliar scene, walked Margaret Menzies' child, all oblivious to the import of the hour and the bitterness of the tragedy whose centre was his own hapless life.

"Is he no' a bonnie laddie?" one mother in Israel whispered to another as the little procession came to an end, the woman's bowed face no longer visible.

"Aye—but he was shapen in iniquity for a' that," was the stern response. "The woman looks like an angel—did ye ever see a sweeter face? My heart's sair for her, puir lassie. Whisht, the Doctor's comin'—there's Archie wi' the Buik."

Dense silence fell upon all the company as the door, a little behind and at one side of the pulpit, slowly opened, through which there came a moment later, clothed in such solemnity as any high priest of old might well have envied, the dignitary known to all Scottish churchmen as "the Beadle." A man of decidedly ministerial appearance, he loved to tell how more than once strangers in St. Andrews had taken him for the minister himself, carrying his own books, when he ascended the pulpit stairs. The possibility of such a sublime mistake gave every such

appearance the charm of romance to him, and deepened the solemn grandeur of his bearing. Wending his way gravely upward, and laying the ponderous Bible reverently on the red cushion that covered the old-fashioned pulpit, the beadle cast upon the waiting congregation a glance that gave some hint of the gulf that separated him from them and them from him; then he slowly descended the creaking stairs and opened the door to admit the only earthly creature he would have acknowledged, in that hour at least, as his superior.

When Dr. Leitch passed the beadle at the foot of the stairs and pressed on, with averted eyes, towards the pulpit, a remarkable hush fell upon the people before him. The stillness, indeed, was almost uncanny; not a rustling page, nor a moving foot, nor a whispered word—not even the munching of the ecclesiastical peppermint, so freely in evidence a minute or two before—disturbed the silence amid which all eyes were fixed on him as he entered the high-perched swallow-nest pulpit, the beadle closing the door behind him and adjusting the wooden button with as awesome a mien as though it belonged to the Ark of the Covenant itself.

Nobody could have looked on the face of Dr. Leitch that Sabbath morning without marking the distress that was written on every lineament. The

approaching duty yawned before him like some dread chasm that must yet be crossed; his tenderness of heart, his sympathy, his sense of personal unworthiness, such as only the worthy know, all combined to render the task before him one of anguish not to be described. Only once did his eyes rest on the still figure bowed in the pew beneath him, and then with a fullness of compassion and wealth of sympathy that swept in an invisible way over the entire congregation.

The opening psalm struck a lofty note of spiritual helpfulness:

> "Oh, blessed is the man whose sins
> The Lord hath covered o'er;
> And the transgressions of whose life
> Remembered are no more"

were the gracious words with which the stern-visaged worshippers reminded their hearts of the mighty doctrine of the Forgiveness of Sins. And in the prayer that followed Dr. Leitch made no reference to the thought of human absolution—but his very soul seemed to disport itself in the transcendent truth that there is mercy with the Lord.

The sermon was very short, which was in striking contrast to the usual custom at St. Andrews; and through it, like a silver cord, ran the thought of the

beauty and glory of Mercy. Some of the older saints, mindful of what was to follow at its close, thought it but a sorry preparation for the sombre duty that remained to be performed.

After Dr. Leitch had closed the Bible he stood for almost a full minute with bowed head and downcast eyes. Then slowly and sadly he lifted his gaze till it rested on the woman in the seat immediately before him. She knew that her hour had come, and her hand went out in dumb groping till it felt and grasped the hard palm of the stern companion at her side. The passion with which he returned her hand-clasp told how deeply and earnestly he shared the Gethsemane of her soul.

"My friends," came from the pulpit in a voice that could not have been heard half-way down the church but for the deathlike stillness that brooded over the awestruck throng, "it rends my heart more than any poor words of mine can tell, that there has fallen to your minister, himself a sinful man, the duty of publicly rebuking one whose life—like his own, like all our lives—has felt the stain of sin. I can only pray that He who is alone All-pure, All-holy, will guide my faltering lips, and clothe me with humility as with a garment. And I entreat of you all, my brethren," leaning in wistful yearning far over the pulpit as he spoke, the broken voice vibrating with its passion,

"I can only entreat of you to listen as for eternity; and to invoke the Divine mercy—more for yourselves than for another; and to remember with humility and contrition of heart that it is far worse to be impure of soul, yet never publicly exposed or branded, than to stand guilty before your fellow men while yet conscious of a true and forgiven heart towards God—far worse to deserve condemnation and not receive it, than to suffer it and yet know that He who alone knows all has also forgiven all. Oh, my friends," the pleading of his voice deepening, his face wrung with the anguish of his soul, "whether men applaud or condemn, we are not therefore otherwise than ourselves—not therefore different, nor more or less guilty, in the pure eyes of that great God with whom, and with whom alone, in the last appeal, our souls have to do.

"And now," he continued after a long and solemn pause had succeeded these deep and searching words, "in accordance with ancient custom, and to make the acknowledgment of sin definite and complete, it is my duty to ask that the one amongst us, the worshipper whom it is now my painful task to admonish before you all, should rise to her feet and hear the words these unworthy lips must seek to utter."

Trembling, and almost stricken by the dreadful silence, Margaret Menzies rose, the tall and comely form bowed as she clung with both hands to the seat

before her. Her face could not be seen. Curiously, and with eager quest of love, the boy beside her plucked his mother's gown as he looked up with perplexed and wistful gaze into the quivering face above him. The silence was oppressive, for Dr. Leitch as yet had uttered no word. Still the woman stood; still the child of her bosom peered with awestruck gaze into his mother's face.

Something, intuitively received, told the breathless multitude that their minister was about to speak. Indeed, his lips were already parted to frame some word with which his awful task was to be begun, when suddenly, without word or glance, Arthur Ainslie rose to his feet, his head bowed low like hers, and took his place beside the woman's dark-robed form. Then once again did Dr. Leitch's lips seem sealed; and stillness, deeper than before, fell on the gathered throng.

Something—was it not the Spirit from on high?—moved over the congregation as the wind of the morning ruffles the face of the waters. For while the silence still brooded deep, and while all heads seemed to be bowed, the feeble frame of one of the elders, far back near the door, rose slowly, heavily leaning upon his staff. Then another, nearer to where Margaret and her uncle were; then still another, and yet another, in different parts of the church,

but all as if animated by a common impulse, mysterious though it was. Till—one by one, then by twos and threes, then by the score, and, at last, as in a body—the rising throng stood in silent ranks about the bended form of her who erstwhile stood alone; before her, behind, on the right hand and on the left. In upon her they seemed to close, as those who would share her place and put to flight her shame. Silent they stood, every head bowed, every heart engaged with its own high concerns and God.

So long did the stillness remain unbroken, no sound issuing from the pulpit above or from the pews beneath, that the situation at length became too tense almost to be borne. Furtively, timidly, one or two at length raised their eyes enough to catch a glimpse of the marble face, the gowned and rigid form, in the sacred spot above. And lo! those who looked saw their minister's face wet with tears, the mist-stained eyes aglow with a great yearning and a greater joy as they roved in love and longing over all the standing throng, resting upon no worshipper who had not risen with the rest.

Long did the saintly face of the minister look out on his beloved people. At length the lips opened once again, as if to speak. And the boldest there that day trembled in wondering fear as to what those words could be—for the hour was one fit for the

Cross. But every head was in a moment bowed again, lower than before: for Dr. Leitch had spread his hands out above them, as in the dear familiar way they had known and loved so long. And softly, with a tenderness like to that of the Master he had served so well, there fell upon their overflowing hearts the words of sweet dismissal:

"And now unto Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, to Him be the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, evermore. Amen."

IX

THE DEBATE ACROSS THE BAR

THE years, swift following, had fled on. And many had come and gone since Margaret Menzies had passed through her chastening ordeal, serene in the peace that she had won towards God, tranquil in the good-will that her heart had ever cherished towards mankind.

Peacefully, in comparative seclusion, had the long years gone by, each day bringing its round of humble tasks, watching as she did with unselfish care over the interests of those who shared with her the happy home life of Arthur Ainslie's farmstead. To these two—her uncle and her son—was her life given in unreserved devotion, satisfied to bear the lifelong burden, to ripen within the shadow, if only the rich rewards of love were not denied her.

Not alone love—but pride as well—had filled her mother-heart as the years rolled by. For Irwin's boyhood and early youth were now merged in an opening manhood of strength and promise. Having early learned, as was inevitable, of the darksome shadow that his birth had cast, and from which his

life could not escape, he had accepted the limitation with the humble faith and quiet resignation that had given his mother's life its beauty—and the resultant power had not been denied his soul.

Gradually taking from his uncle's shoulders the burden of the farm toil, he had yet found time and opportunity to supplement the early education of his youth with a sustained mental discipline and devotion to books that had at length given him a place of comparative prominence in the circle amid which his lot was cast. He had, in particular, developed a taste for politics, and an aptitude for public speaking, that was already making him the hope of not a few, ambitious that one of their own station in life should yet obtain distinction.

The long years of toil had left their mark on Arthur Ainslie. Old age was beginning to creep upon him, greeted though it was with the manly fortitude that had ever been his own. Still erect and strong—his only marked frailty a spasmodic weakness of the heart which he knew would ultimately bring it the long repose—he cheerfully gave himself up to all that would increase the comfort or enhance the happiness of these two whom he loved with all the strength of a large and loving soul. But business cares had helped to subdue the buoyant fire of his nature. Like so many of the early pioneers, the

transition from the old home to the new—from the log cabin to the imposing residence of brick or stone —had come too soon, effected only by that fatal aid of *mortgage*, so often the bane and burden of all the after years.

The years had passed, as has been said; and they had brought, as is inevitable, change in face and frame to the dwellers on the humble farm. But not alone to individuals had these changes come: to communities as well—and to few more than to Glen Ridge.

Glen Ridge had steadily beaten the forest back Little by little it had encroached upon it, redeeming it to the civilization of a now thriving village, its citizens already beginning to speculate as to how soon their burgh should attain the dignity of a town. And on every hand could be seen evidences of the prosperity that the years had brought; new stores, with gaudy windows; factories, with their tall chimneys belching smoke; dwellings, whose owners and inmates were trying to forget the humble makeshifts of earlier days.

But many of the buildings remained the same, unchanged with the changing years. And one of the most notable of these was Dinny's domicile and place of business, The Buck Tavern, which still presented the same modest front to the ever welcome public, its creaking sign still announcing the cheering commodity that might be obtained within.

On this particular evening, Dinny—grown older with the years, but almost buoyant as of yore—was taking his ease beneath the blossoming shade of a fairly prosperous apple tree whose doom it was to pass its uneventful years in the back yard of The Buck Tavern. Business being distinctly dull, no customers in prospect, Dinny was enjoying a quiet smoke while he read the news of the day as reported in the *Glen Ridge Banner*. Suddenly he gave a low whistle and looked up quickly from his paper.

"Nora," he said, glancing round the yard; "I thought ye were here, child. Nora, come here, Nora," he called louder.

"Yes, father," came from somewhere within the house. The voice rang clear and sweet; no wonder Dinny smiled, himself unconscious of it, and turned his eyes towards the weather-beaten door that stood open against the water barrel beneath the rusty rain-spout. And a moment later, radiant with health and aglow with exuberance of spirits, there came tripping gaily out a form as lithe and a face as winsome as ever gladdened a father's eyes. The fullness of approaching womanhood had not yet displaced the lovely pliable lines that give to the girlish form its charm. A wealth of hair, black as the deepest night, threw into beautiful relief the pink and white that come to perfection only on the cheek of Irish beauty;

a brow high and broad, almost shining in its chiselled perfectness, gave evidence alike of strength of intellect and purity of soul; the throat, full and firm as is inevitable when emotion flowers almost into passion, led up to a shapely chin, delicately rounded—and, farther up, to a pair of lips that would seem to testify to all sweetness of taste and all gentleness of speech through the long years that beauty had employed in moulding them to her will; while, looking out with a sort of primal simplicity and power, the dark brown eyes scattered hints of mirth and seriousness, of strength and tenderness, with every witching glance.

"Yes, father," she said again, coming to a standstill only when she stood beneath the spreading apple tree, one half-bared arm, appetizing to behold, uplifted towards a spray of blossoms as sweet as the hand that plucked them; "did you call me, father?"

"Yes," said Dinny, withdrawing his eyes from her and turning them again upon the weekly journal; "there's somethin' in this here paper I wanted to show ye. Look there. Old Hilliard's comin' back—the old lobster's goin' to lecture here agin."

"Hilliard?" repeated the girl, evidently none the wiser; "Hilliard—who is Hilliard, father?"

"Don't ye mind him, Nora? Don't ye mind that old spalpeen that was here long ago—he was a lecturer, a timperance lecturer, ye mind?"

Nora knit her eyebrows and thought furiously for a moment. "No," she said, "I can't get any trace of him, father. I guess you're thinking of 'ould Kilkarty' days, before I was born," and the laugh that followed set off her speech as the many-coloured blossoms set off the tree above her.

"Och, no," said her father, making a mock flourish towards her with the paper in his hand, "sure it was right in that room he slept, up there furninst yer eyes," pointing with the *Glen Ridge Banner* towards a tiny window just above them, every pane blushing with fiery emotion as the setting sun kissed it, just as if the same old sun had not done the selfsame thing a thousand times before. "I put him to bed, up there—manny's the time; used to do everythin' for him, except say his prayers," and Dinny grinned as memory reproduced the scene.

"Put him to bed?" echoed Nora. "What for—was he naughty?"

Dinny nodded, the grin widening. "Naughty as the old bhoy himself," he confirmed, shaking his head mournfully. "He's a Scotchman, ye see, Nora—even if he *did* lecture in Kilkarty once—an', the fuller he was, the longer it took him to say his prayers. There wasn't annything he didn't pray for—when he was full," Dinny went on ruefully. "One night he prayed for the Pope—but I stopped him—told him

he was wastin' his time; an' I chucked him into bed an' put out the light. He niver *would* pray in the dark—fancied no one could hear him then, I think. What are ye lookin' at, Nora?" for the girl, now tiptoeing from the lower beam of the board fence behind the tree, was staring down the street.

"Two men," she replied, without turning her head; "two men coming this way. One of them, I think—I'm sure—is Dr. Leitch; but I can't make out the other. He looks sick—I think Dr. Leitch is helping him along. I believe they're coming here—the one I don't know, he's pointing at the house, father. I believe they're coming here."

Dinny rose; taking his stand on an empty keg that had served a nobler purpose before its inward glory was departed, he took a long look down the road.

"By the powers," Nora heard him mutter; "by the powers o' Kelly himself, that's Hilliard. That's Hilliard—as sure as the potaty crop failed," he went on, making his vows to himself. "An' he's—yes, he's sick—begorra, but he's sick; the same disease he had when I put him to bed," he enlarged, quickly repressing a grin. "An' him got to lecture to-morrow night—on timperance, too! Bedad, it's a quick recovery he'll have to be after makin'—if he's goin' to shillelah us to-morrow night, Nora," pointing an illuminating thumb over his shoulder towards the bar;

"don't that beat all Killaloe now, the likes o' that? Come down, Nora; stoop down, my darlint, afore they get a sight av ye."

Both dropped down behind the fence. The two wayfarers drew nearer; and soon their voices could be heard, evidently in argument.

"Certainly we'll go in the front door," came the voice of the layman—"who ever heard of a gentleman going in by a back yard gate?" taking a new grip of the minister's arm as he delivered himself.

"I'm going in that way," came the gentle voice of Dr. Leitch; "and I'm reckoned to be a gentleman—round here, at least."

The other stopped stock still, swinging around till he faced his companion. "But I'm more than a gentleman," he announced with preternatural gravity; "I'm an orator."

Dr. Leitch smiled. There was as much of sadness as of pleasantry in the smile. "I used to be one too," he said; "they used to call me that." The look in the deep lustrous eyes was quite lost on the man beside him; but the story of long years, and their ambition, perhaps their disappointment too, was all written there. Those eyes, at least, were eloquent.

"May I ask, sir," the lecturer demanded formally, "why you prefer to approach The Buck Tavern by this back door method—sneaking in through a hole

in the fence instead of entering in by the door, as the Scripture says?" he concluded unctuously.

"Oh, well," and Dr. Leitch was smiling; "it's safer, I fancy. To be plain with you, I want to go in without—without going past the bar."

"Why?" demanded the other quickly.

"Well, because I consider it—I consider it more or less of a temptation, sir."

At this the lecturer stopped still once more, and fixed a very nomadic pair of eyes on the minister. "Sir," he said sternly, "your weakness shocks me. I thought you had more power of will, sir—this is an acknowledgment, Doctor, that I wouldn't have expected from a man in your position; wouldn't have expected, sir," he repeated, looking up pityingly into the minister's face.

"I never made it before," said Dr. Leitch, wrestling with a very insistent grin.

"Give me your hand, sir," cried the other, extending his own. "I honour you for your candour, sir—it takes a big man to own up to his weakness like this. Why didn't you tell me of this before? Come, Doctor, we'll go in the back gate, as you wish—I'd go in underground, on my hands and knees, before I'd make my brother to offend, as the Apostle says."

The two men were now close to the fence. But the lecturer seemed to be still struggling with the

moral side of the situation. "Nobody ever knows," he was saying, as much to himself as to the Doctor; "nobody would have thought that the minister of St. Andrews has his own struggles," he ruminated—"it all goes to show what a hold the accursed stuff gets of a man, no matter who he is. And so you hate to pass a bar, Doctor," he went on in a rather louder tone; "hate to pass a bar, eh?"

The Doctor nodded, smiling and hurrying towards the gate. The blossom-laden boughs fell just above it.

But the lecturer stopped him again, adjusting an index finger in the topmost buttonhole of the Doctor's broadcloth. Then he winked twice, with a solemnity that put the broadcloth to shame. "So do I," he whispered, indulging at the same time a grimace whose significance Dr. Leitch was at a loss to understand; "I hate to pass one too—when I'm like this," with which illuminating remark he actually made a jocular thrust at the Doctor's anatomy with an extended thumb, the first time, doubtless, such a familiarity had been attempted in all the history of Glen Ridge.

For answer, the minister stepped forward to the gate, holding it open with as much grace and dignity as though he were admitting a prince of the realm. The lecturer stopped midway, drawing close to the

Doctor and placing his lips almost to his ear; "You're safe with me," he whispered reassuringly—"no living soul will ever know what you've told me; wild horses couldn't pull it out of me," he added, nodding desperately towards the Doctor as he made his vows.

By this time Dinny was on his way over to meet his visitors. "The top o' the evenin' to ye, Doctor," he cried cheerily, hurrying forward with outstretched hand. "It's welcome ye are. An' I'll be blissed if this ain't my old friend Hilliard—how are ye, Mr. Hilliard? Come here, Nora, come an' speak to the gintlemen," beckoning to the comely girl who was slowly following in the rear.

Nora shook hands with the minister, courtesying shyly to the stranger. "Sure this isn't anny sort of a place for entertainin' company," Dinny suddenly affirmed; "come on in wid me, into the house. Come, Doctor—come, Mr. Hilliard; sure it's proud the old place'll be to see ye again after all these years."

But Mr. Hilliard raised his hand in solemn protest, taking his stand between Dinny and the minister. "No," he said firmly, "we'll stay here—here, under the sweet and innocent apple blossoms, unstained by the foul aroma that destroys body and soul alike."

Dinny stood rooted to the ground, scratching a very perplexed head the while. "What the—what the divil d'ye mean?" he demanded as soon as he could speak, exceeding red in the face.

The lecturer stood nobly at bay, his eyes slightly turned towards heaven. "I'm not at liberty to say," he answered, after a long pause, snuffing like a giraffe of the desert at the blossoms he had so fervently applauded; "suffice it to say, Mr. Riley, suffice it to say it's not for myself. But every man is his brother's keeper in this world, you know, Mr. Riley," trying hard to keep his eyes off the Doctor. "It's the strong that have to bear the burdens of the weak, we're told. So we'll just stay under the apple blossoms, Mr. Riley—in this sweet Eden, I might say, untainted by the noxious breath that—that puts an enemy in your brains to steal away your mouth, as the poet says, Mr. Riley," well pleased that the faithful quotation had not escaped him.

Dinny was about to make a reply worthy of the occasion when he happened to notice that Dr. Leitch was trying desperately to attract his attention. Nora said afterwards that the Doctor winked at her father in the excess of his endeavour to enlighten him, but all who knew the dignified divine scorned the very idea.

"I invited Mr. Hilliard to spend the night with me

at the Manse," Dr. Leitch began as soon as he could find an opening, "but he insisted on coming down here to you. I think he said you both came from the same place in Ireland and ——"

"Pardon me, sir," interrupted the lecturer loftily, "but you're mistaken. I have my faults, I know,—but I'm no Irishman. I'm from Arbroath, and every ancestor of the name is as Scotch as Robert Bruce. That's all right, Doctor—I know you meant no offense—but no man likes to be accused of a thing he's not guilty of."

"Ye can't be anny too sure ye're Scotch to suit me," retorted Dinny, with mock contempt; "sure they're welcome to ye."

"You've got Scotch blood yourself, if I'm not mistaken," conceded the lecturer encouragingly.

"Divil a dhrop," Dinny disavowed.

"Indeed! You never told me that before," returned Mr. Hilliard.

"I niver boast—unless I'm forced to it," quoth Dinny.

Dr. Leitch covered his retreat towards the gate by a peal of laughter. "Well, I'll leave you to settle this between yourselves," he said over his shoulder as he was about to disappear. "You'll have to keep the peace, Nora. I have a call or two to make, so I must be going. I'll leave the orator in your hands,"

smiling broadly as he made his way out on to the street.

"You'll be sure to turn up at the lecture to-morrow night?" roared Mr. Hilliard after him. "I want you to move the vote of thanks." Dr. Leitch's reply was lost in transit.

The minister gone, Dinny gave his full attention to his guest. "What's goin' to be yer subject to-morrow night?" he asked abruptly.

"'The Barroom and the Home,'" returned Mr. Hilliard, as promptly as though he had been asked the time of day. "I say, Dinny—that's the name suits you best—let us go into the house," moving thither as he spoke.

"Not yet," said Dinny firmly; "there isn't anny hurry—we'll just stay here under these unstenchful—or whatever ye call it—these unstinted blossoms that the breath o' man or beast niver smelt; that was what ye said, wasn't it? Tell us what ye're goin' to say about the Barroom in the Home—a divil of a funny like place to have it, if ye ask me," Dinny ventured, shaking his head in some perplexity.

"Come on in, Dinny," pleaded the lecturer—"let us go in the house. I want to see the old place again. Anyhow, these blossoms make me sick—they're too strong. And my lecture *isn't* the 'Barroom in the Home'; it's the 'Home in the Bar-

room'—*versus* it, I mean,—something like that. I've got it in my valise, and the Doctor's going to send it down. Let's go on in, Dinny—I want to speak to you," casting a sidelong glance at Nora, now busy at a little distance in relieving the apple tree of a caterpillar's web.

"No," Dinny persisted resolutely, "we won't go in. Sure it's the pure air we're after gettin' here—can't ye be aisy, an' talk a while?"

Something like anger began to glow far back in the somnolent eyes of the orator. "I don't care whether you go in or not," he broke out after a rather sullen pause. "Anyhow, it won't be long till you won't *have* any place to go into—there, you can put that in your pipe and smoke it," throwing his chin defiantly upward as he turned and inspected Dinny.

"What's that ye're sayin'?" and there was a sharp, excited strain in Dinny's voice—perhaps he had heard something about this before. "I won't have anny place to go to—is that what ye're after puttin' up to me?" the keen eyes fixed inquiringly on the face of the lecturer.

"Yes, that's what I said. They're going to shut you up before long—there won't be any Buck Tavern in Glen Ridge after a while. Nor any Queen's Arms either—they're going to shut up that other hole too. Both of them. Yes," and the reformer's

arms began to move, "the time is coming when our fair country will be no more cursed with these cess-pools of iniquity, when the wail of the orphan shall be hushed in the land, when every hell-hole that now pours forth ——"

"Hey?" cried Dinny. "Hey? By the powers o' ——"

"Its blood-stained stream of misery and death," pursued the orator, "that now drenches our streets with its crimson tide; when all these haunts of Satan ——"

But by this time Dinny was at close quarters with the eloquent one. "By the powers o' Maud Kelly," he wailed, in a tone such as a child uses when tears are close, "if this ain't more than the Apostle Paul himself would put up wid," clutching one arm that but a moment ago had been devoted to the high ends of oratory; "I'll 'drinch' ye, ye spalpeen, ye—an' I'll 'haunt' ye, ye sassy varmint, ye—comin' to a dacent man's house an' insultin' him," steadily assisting the protesting rhetorician towards the gate as he relieved his burdened mind; "I'll larn ye to name a dacent tavern in the same breath wid a dirty hole like the Queen's Arms that a black-headed, close-fisted Scotchman runs on a back street. I'll larn ye, ye ——"

"Let me finish my speech," protested Mr. Hilliard.

"This is—this is irregular, to say the least. Wait till I'm through—I have some kind words for the misguided rumseller, the last page but one—I'll show it to you when I get my valise."

"I'll misguide ye—an' I'll show ye—widout anny valise either," puffed Dinny, for the lecturer was a cheerful liver and had something to show for it.

But just before he reached the gate, interference came from an unexpected quarter. Nora's hand was on her father's arm, lightly at first, then restraining with all her strength; and the entreaty in the brown eyes was too sincere to go unheeded.

"Don't, father," she said, almost peremptorily; "you shan't—you mustn't send him away like that. He came here because he trusted you—and besides, it will soon be dark," glancing as she spoke towards the already setting sun.

"But ye heard what the—the cratur'"—the amendment was for Nora's sake—"what he had the owdacity to say to me," protested Dinny, still holding his guest by the coat collar. Nora put her hand on his and gently forced a release; the guest straightened himself and devoted his energies to the adjusting of the aforesaid collar and other features of his apparel that had been disturbed by Dinny's attachment.

"So we've got to take care of him, father," Nora said in an undertone; "we're the only Irish people

round here, you know—and we've got to teach them hospitality; like 'ould Kilkarty,' you know."

The word acted like magic on Dinny. "Here, give us yer hand," he said impulsively, turning Mr. Hilliard round by the shoulders to enable him to do so—for Mr. Hilliard was much confused. "I know you didn't mean annything—an' ye're welcome as the flowers in May. Come on wid me, we'll go into the house. But it's *up-stairs* we'll go, mind ye—it's the up-stairs ye need, my friend, an' not the other place."

Mr. Hilliard whimpered a little, wept a little, moved a little, all the time protesting his devotion to Dinny as a brother man, how far soever their respective callings might divide them, trying nobly at the same time to define the particular class of angel to which his daughter undoubtedly belonged; and thus, with many protestations of good-will on the one hand and of forgiveness on the other—and with frequent reference to the catholic sentiments that marked the closing words of the oration, as should be demonstrated on the arrival of the orator's valise—the now lachrymose reformer was safely deposited in bed, in the little chamber above the bar.

"What have you got the key of Mr. Hilliard's room for, father?" Nora inquired, glancing at his hand as Dinny returned to the barroom from the outer door. For one drouthy patron had been

waiting; and Dinny had relieved his pain, even while he encouraged his departure.

"Och, well—he's right over us here, ye see. An' ye can't niver tell—he might get onaisy, if he heard business goin' on down here. I'm worrit bad about him, Nora."

"Worried—what for, father?"

"About to-morrow night," Dinny answered, shaking his head seriously; "it's to-morrow night he's goin' to jaw the natives—on the 'Barroom in the Home,'" and Dinny grinned significantly, "an' he isn't goin' to be in anny fit shape for enlightenin' the brethren—unless we get him fixed up in the meantime," as he scratched his Irish head in sore misgiving.

"Do you know what he's going to say, father—the line of his speech, I mean?" and the girl's lips could be seen to quiver as she put the question. Her eyes were fixed very intently on her father.

Dinny looked down at her with infinite fondness; something of pity, too, was in his face. He kicked a huge spittoon into its place towards the middle of the floor, then turned mechanically and walked to his accustomed stand behind the bar. His arms were folded on it; and he looked, without moving an eyelid, into his daughter's face. "He'll give yer father the—he'll give him all consarned, Nora; me,

an' Jock Taylor, that keeps the Queen's Arms—it's a divil of a fine name, ain't it now, for a dirty joint like that; an' ivery mother's son av us that keeps a tavern—that'll be *his line*, as ye call it, Nora. But he trusts me, as ye pointed out, girl—an' he fetched a letter av interduction from Jake Cassidy the first time he come—an' I guess we'll have to look after the cratur'."

"Don't you think he's right, father?" the maiden suddenly demanded, looking up quickly; then she dropped her eyes to the floor again, as if afraid, or ashamed of what she had said.

Dinny looked at her for several moments in silence. His face was pale. And when he spoke, his eyes still fixed on her, there was a noticeable tremulousness about the lips. "I don't unnerstand ye, Nora," he said, trying to control his voice. "D'ye mean he's right, to be—to be abusin' honest men, tryin' to make an honest livin', Nora?"

The girl came closer, and her beautiful face showed the pain she felt. Her bosom was heaving as she stood before him; his face was paler than before. "Oh, father," she broke out now—for she saw there was nothing to be concealed—"oh, father, you know what I mean. You know how I hate it all, father—how I've hated it all more and more, ever since I was big enough to know what it meant! Let us stop,

father—father, dear, let us stop—and just live together—you and me—and not do this, this business, any more."

Dinny was staring at her as though she were a ghost; for this was almost a bolt from the blue. But the earnestness on the face before him, the pleading in the tearful eyes, the quivering voice that spoke the burning words, all told him that this was a matter of life and death, to her at least.

"Whisht, girl," he said, as sternly as it was possible for him to speak to her, the very apple of his eye as she was; "sure ye don't know what ye're talkin' about—d'ye know it's yer own father ye're abusin', child?" his eyes now almost as moist as her own, his hand trembling as he raised it in protest.

"You mustn't—you shan't—you can't say that, father," she retorted passionately; "you know you're the only one in the world I love. You're all I've got," the words coming out in broken fragments—"and I'm all *you* have too. And it's because you're so good," she went on pleadingly, drawing closer to him; "you're far too good for this—look at your kindness to that poor man up-stairs, there isn't one in ten thousand would do what you're doing—and that's why I want you to give it up, to give it all up, father. Won't you, for my sake—because I love you so,"

the beautiful eyes all suffused as they looked appealingly into the troubled face opposite her own.

Dinny tried a thrust of almost cruel sternness. "Ye're gettin' ashamed av yer old dad," he said, a shade of bitterness on his face; "it's them pious friends o' yours that's doin' it—fellows like that there young Irwin Menzies. Ye don't fancy, d'ye, that I don't know he's sweet on ye—he's been talkin' to ye, hasn't he, girl, an' puttin' high-falutin' notions in yer head? But I can tell him something about himself," Dinny went on, reckless now; "I can tell *him* what kind of a cradle *he* was rocked in, if he wants to know. An' it won't——"

But he got no further. "Stop it," Nora cried passionately, and the glasses on the shelf, frail maiden though she was, rattled in their places as the girl stamped her foot on the unsteady floor; right up to the bar she walked, her eyes ablaze with a fire Dinny had never seen before, her face as white as death, all tears vanished now, her blanched lips parted as the panting breath came through them. "I won't—I won't hear to it," she cried, the voice shaking so she could hardly speak. "I don't care anything for Irwin Menzies—and he doesn't for me—I don't know him—I don't like him—I hate him, despise him—and I won't ever speak to him again. Never, never," she protested, the banished

tears welling back in overflowing drops, "but it's a shame—it's the only mean thing you ever did—to sneer at him for, for—something he couldn't help. And I won't ever speak to him again—never, never—but, oh, father, what made you?—oh, how could you, father?" and now the beautiful head was bended low, clasped in the white shapely hands that were resting on the bar. Strange spectacle it was; the landlord, shaking like a leaf at the sudden stream of passion—which reminded him of her mother—towering above the stooping form; which form, in all the beauty and charm of opening womanhood, was bowed half-way over the rude counter of a country tavern where coarse yokels were wont to lean as they drank their deep potations; and, background for all, the wooden shelves from which bottles and tumblers of various shapes and sizes looked down on this strange scene from the great drama of human life.

Dinny reached out one hand in a timid, hesitating way towards the beautiful head that was lying now on the enfolded arms. He felt a new sort of fear, something he had never known before, as if a gulf had suddenly begun to yawn between him and his idol; he touched some outlying strands of the flowing hair, carefully, as though he were taking a liberty beyond his right—and he noticed how

coarse and rough was his extended hand. But the touch seemed to inflame him; greedily his fingers gathered the stray threads, eagerly following up till soon both hands were holding the unresisting head. Then he bowed beside her, his cheek pressed close against her own, his hands still patting and fondling wherever they touched the dear face or head.

"Sure I didn't mean to hurt ye, Mavourneen," he murmured, dwelling on the word as only Irish lips know how; "an' I haven't got annything agin' that there Menzies boy. But it hurted, it hurted me, Nora, to think ye'd talk agin' yer father's business. It's all we've got to live on, Nora—an' we've got to live, my darlint. But we've always tried to live an' let live at it, haven't we, Nora, an' ——"

Suddenly Dinny stopped, then moved quickly from behind the counter towards the door. He was just in time to slam it in the face of two very moist looking swains who were pressing eagerly towards the bar, their mouths set in anticipation. A wail of protest came from the outer porch as the door slammed shut; this was "Paradise Lost" to them. "The divil take yez," muttered Dinny under his breath. Then, the protest deepening: "Ye can't get annything now," he hissed through the keyhole. "I'm busy wid—wid an inspector," indulging a shame-

less grin in the direction of the unseen applicants; "ye'll have to go to The Queen's Arms—off wid ye now," wherewith he started back, his pace quickening as he saw the girl still bending where he had left her. Round to the back of the bar he went again; again he gathered the drooping head and shoulders in his arms.

"Ye've been so good, Nora," he whispered, "so good—an' ye've worked so hard, an' kep' the place so neat and tidy. An' there mustn't annything come between us now," he murmured pleadingly; "an' there won't be, will there, my darlint?"

She raised her face, tear-stained but lovely. The smile that gathered on it was as sad as sweet. "This is all that's between us, father," she said—"just what's between us now."

"What's that?" inquired Dinny sharply, disappointedly; "what's between us now?—there isn't annything between us, girl."

"Just *this*," said Nora, smiling in a pitiful sort of way and looking into her father's eyes. As she spoke she tapped lightly on the bar with the long tapering fingers; "this, father—*this* is what's between us. Oh, father," and the fingers beat a little tattoo on the resounding board, "you know, and I know, it isn't right. You know that sometimes poor men—when you can't tell—put down

their money here," the fingers tapping still, "that ought to buy bread and shoes for their children—you know that's *bound* to happen, father, even if you wouldn't take it if you knew. And it's because you're too good—you're too good and noble for that sort of thing. And I'd sooner," the girl straightening herself to her full length, "I'd sooner slave, or beg—or steal—yes, I'd sooner steal, from people that have plenty, than feel that the bread I eat may be taken from hungry children's mouths. Oh, father, let us stop; let us leave it all, and go away somewhere together—you and I—and begin all over again."

Dinny held his daughter out from him, his arms outstretched across the bar. "Nora," he began, and his face was very grave, "there's somethin' I'm goin' to ask ye. Don't ye think my father—d'ye think *he's* in heaven? Answer me, girl—tell me what ye think."

Nora's face showed the surprise she felt. "Why!" she began, her lips slightly parted as she gazed at him, "of course he is—of course grandfather's there. He was good."

"An' he kep' a tavern—he kep' 'The Black Bull' in Kilkarty," Dinny returned triumphantly; "an' he niver put a dhrop o' watter —— What the divil's that?—d'ye mind that, now? Did ye ever hear a

noise like that in yer born days?" he inquired, his head uplifted towards the source of the commotion. "It's Hilliard," he added, though quite unnecessarily, for that gentleman's voice was easy of identification.

"What do you suppose he wants?" said Nora, stepping to the door and glancing up the stairs.

"Haven't anny idea in the world," Dinny replied, winking violently into space; "but it ain't buttermilk, I'll tell ye that. Poor divil, I'll just give him a wee dhrop, to kind o' quinch him like," turning as he spoke and taking down a decanter from the shelf; "sure it's hydryphoby he'll be after takin', if I don't."

"Don't, father, don't," Nora protested; "I'd let him have his 'hydryphoby'—you mustn't, father. It's wrong—and besides, I thought you were going to fix him up for his lecture to-morrow night?"

"So I am," affirmed Dinny, beginning to pour as he spoke. "This is just to save the cratur's life."

Whereat Nora came to close quarters with her father. "I won't have it," she said with authority; "it isn't right."

But Dinny struggled towards the door. "Nora," he said, as he turned and confronted her, "was ye ever parched up inside o' ye—like a lime-kiln—for a dhrop o' this?"

For answer Nora's nimble fingers snatched the

glass from her father's hand; like a flash she reached for a pitcher standing on the bar and filled the glass half full of the cold spring water it contained.

"Och, Nora," Dinny cried in loud dismay, "sure this'll break his heart—d'ye expect me to offer the likes o' this to a man that's perishin'," sniffing contemptuously at the unequal mixture.

"He'll never know the difference," Nora flung back; "off with you, now," gently pushing her father towards the door. "Quick—his hydrophobia's getting worse," as sundry sounds of objurgation and appeal floated from above.

"Och, begorra," Dinny wailed, as he went up the narrow stairs, "but it's hard to keep an honest bar wid womenfolks around ye. Sure, my father niver done the likes o' this till his dyin' day—I'm comin', Mr. Hilliard," he roared above the din, "an' I'm fetchin' ye somethin' ye haven't tasted the likes av in forty year."

X

A FACE IN MEMORY'S HALL

THE next morning found the lecturer penitent and poetical. Above all things else, on this particular morning, his mind turned to the serenity and sweet repose of rural life. Nothing would do but that he should spend the day in the country. "The sweet verdant fields, the simple life, the homely fare," would make a new man of him again, vowed he. To which proposal Dinny gave full consent, hopeful that this might make all secure against the evening's performance; wherefore, after a little pressure on his part, and not a little of shy reluctance on the part of Nora, it was decided that she should convoy the lecturer to the farmhouse she and her father knew the best and visited the oftenest. Which, as was natural enough after the associations of earlier years, enriched by long acquaintance since, was the cheery homestead of Arthur Ainslie. There, they knew, a ready welcome was ever waiting.

So forth they set on foot, Nora and the lecturer, the latter in that half incoherent frame of mind that

so often follows such experiences as Mr. Hilliard had enjoyed the day before.

"That's the house," Nora said at length, pointing to the substantial and rather imposing structure that could be seen in the distance through the trees. The old log cabin had gone the way of so many of the first homes of the pioneers—but this has been already told.

Her companion glanced at it. "Scotch," he said, laconically.

"What do you mean?" asked Nora, at a loss to know.

"The inmates of that house are Scotch, that's what I mean," elaborated Mr. Hilliard, casting another careless glance towards the place in question.

"How can you tell that?" Nora inquired curiously.

"By the wood-pile," replied the other, as confidently as if he were demonstrating a problem in mathematics; "wood-pile right up against the door, you see. That's always a sign they're Scotch. That's done to save time—to save paying servants for walking. Sure sign. Wonderful people, the Scotch—I'm Scotch myself," he added modestly, hurrying as he spoke, for he knew it was about time for "the humble fare" that had been the subject of his eulogy before he started.

"Who's that there—that young fellow, plough-

ing?" was Mr. Hilliard's sudden inquiry as they were passing a field between the road and the house; "fine figure of a youth, who ever he is," he added, surveying the goodly proportions of the form behind the plough.

"Oh," said Nora, with well arranged surprise—"there *is* somebody there, isn't there? I know him too, I think," she went on naively, conscious of a telltale cheek; "that's Mr. Menzies—he lives on this farm, with his uncle. He does most of the work now—I think," she added carefully.

The toiler himself was not oblivious to his surroundings; he was already moving towards the fence, leaving his plough in the furrow. The face of the youth, bronzed as it was by the sun, was of a decidedly serious cast, but a glow of gladness could be seen upon it as he hurried towards the strangers. His form was tall and powerful, straight as an arrow, significant in every line of the strength and vigour that purity of life and plainness of living seldom fail to bestow.

"Good-morning, Nora," he said in greeting, lifting his broad-brimmed straw hat; "good-morning, sir," turning to the stranger. "Are you coming in, Nora?"

Mr. Hilliard was studying the youth before him. It was evident that the impression was favourable.

Nor was this to be wondered at, for there was a candour and honesty about the young man's face, a strength of self-reliance looking out from the large earnest eyes, and a comeliness of both form and feature that might well provoke confidence and admiration.

"That's what we were planning—there's no place else to go, by this road, is there?" smiling as she glanced along the narrow lane leading to the house. "This is Mr. Hilliard, Mr. Menzies. He's a friend of father's—and he wanted to spend the day in the country; he hasn't—hasn't been very well," colouring in some embarrassment as she spoke—"and father thought you'd be glad to see us."

"Your father was right," the young man replied quietly as he shook hands with the new acquaintance. "Uncle will be as pleased as I am—and you know how much that is," looking out earnestly from beneath the broad hat that shaded his eyes.

"Thank you," replied the girl; "father made me come, Mr. Menzies—I ought to be at home," she added nervously, as if her speech pleased her ill.

"The tyrant!" said the other, without looking up. "Was it he that made you call me Mr. Menzies, too?—come on, let us go to the house. I guess I'd better unhitch the horses and start them home," glancing towards the very stationary steeds.

"Why," the girl inquired, "aren't you going to finish your work? You mustn't let us interrupt you, you know."

He made no response, but started, whistling, towards the team. Released, they made their way at a rapid walk across the field in the direction of the barn.

"There's uncle," Irwin exclaimed, pointing towards the house as he rejoined the visitors, "and I think he's got his eye on us—he's looking this way. Now he's making for the house—I guess he's gone in to tell mother. We country people are easily agitated, Mr. Hilliard," turning towards him and smiling as he spoke; "company is quite an event in our humdrum lives."

"Man is a sociable animal," remarked the lecturer sagely. "Does your father live here too, Mr. Menzies?" he suddenly inquired, nodding towards the house in the distance.

"No," said the other. He was looking far beyond the house, beyond the fields—far, far.

"Oh," Nora broke in at race-horse speed, "are you going to the lecture to-night, Irwin? Mr. Hilliard's going to lecture, you know," her voice agitated beyond all apparent necessity for so commonplace a question.

Irwin smiled. "I think I'll send uncle," he said;

"these old Scotch elders need that sort of thing more than us younger folks."

"Your uncle's an elder?" gravely broke in the lecturer. Irwin nodded.

"And Scotch?"

"Scotch as heather," said his nephew.

"Worst kind," murmured the lecturer, shaking his head; "terrible combination, sir—there's no kind gives me as much trouble in my work—terrible, the hold it gets on them. But I hope you'll send him in, sir; we've got to do our part, you know—then our skirts are clear. Here he is—why, he's coming to meet us," for just at this juncture the door opened again and Arthur Ainslie emerged, hurrying towards the approaching guests.

The introductory greetings over—gravely sincere on the part of the elder, effusively emotional on the part of the other—the company made their way together to the house, savoury odours stealing forth to meet them, the lecturer's pace perceptibly quickening thereat.

"This is my mother," Irwin said, as the door closed behind them. "Mother, this is Mr. Hilliard, a friend of Mr. Riley's—and he's come out to spend the day in the country."

The woman advanced to meet him, her hand extended. Very lovely was the sweet face, rosy from

her exertions in the preparing of the dinner and from the heat of the fire; the snow-white apron that she wore added to the comeliness of her appearance —and the already quickly whitening hair lent to the soft skin and mantled cheeks a look of peach-like beauty.

Her welcome to the stranger was cordial, if quiet and restrained. But after the first words of greeting were over, her eyes turned again and again in furtive glances to his face. Something about it seemed to puzzle her. She could not but feel that she had seen that face before, somewhere in the long ago. There was, however, little time to spare from the task that engrossed her, as the dinner was waiting to be served. Which accomplished, she seemed rather loath than otherwise to engage in conversation with the new acquaintance as they sat together at the table.

Nor was there much need that she should talk; for the stranger and her uncle attended to all that, engrossed as they were in a conversation that soon developed into a vigorous debate.

"I canna' agree wi' ye there," Arthur Ainslie was saying—"tak' anither piece o' the steak, Mr. Hilliard; thae ither three bits ye had was tough, I'm dootin'," as he glanced at the lecturer's again empty plate. "I canna' agree wi' ye there. I wadna' gang sae far

as that, to say that naebody can be a Christian if they tak' a drappie. Oh, no, I think ye're wrang, Mr. Hilliard."

The other shook his head sadly. "It doesn't give me any pleasure to say it, Mr. Ainslie," he remarked sorrowfully, "but I think I've got the Scripture for it. 'If meat make my brother to offend,' you know, Mr. Ainslie."

"Will ye ha'e a piece mair o' the steak?" again inquired his host, with gravity undisturbed.

"Thank you, sir; yes, I believe I will—and I think you'll come, in time, to see the thing in the same light I do, Mr. Ainslie. A man can't be both right and wrong, you know, Mr. Ainslie."

The Scotchman paid no attention to this. His mind was on the original point of debate. "My faither," he went on earnestly, "he took his toddy the longest day he lived—an' he went to his rest in peace," was added reverently. "An' I'm no' worthy to loose his shoe's latchet," he affirmed solemnly; "nor you yirsel'—ye're no' worthy either, sir," with rising voice and heightening colour, as he turned in his chair and looked fixedly at his guest.

The lecturer glanced, startled, at his host. Evidently the argument had gone far enough. "Was your father—was he a Scotchman?" he asked, glad to give a turn to the conversation.

"Aye—that he was," returned Arthur Ainslie emphatically.

"What part of Scotland?" pursued the other, for want of something else to say.

"He was frae Hawick—an' he was an elder i' the parish kirk," his host answered with noticeable pride.

"Hawick!" echoed Mr. Hilliard, interested now. "Why, I know Hawick—I've been often there. It seemed to me when I first came in—when I first met your, your niece——" Then he stopped and turned abruptly to the woman at the head of the table.

"Are you from Hawick too, madam?" he asked, his knife and fork laid, and for the first time since he began, upon his plate.

Margaret Menzies started as he put the question to her, her face paling to whiteness. Almost like some hunted thing at bay, she fixed her eyes on his, half appealingly, half defiantly. A moment later her self-control asserted itself again, the old poise of dignity and sweetness restored to her.

"Yes," she said; "yes, I'm from Hawick too."

Her eyes were still fixed on his. And there they rested a moment, the man's face giving evidence of all he felt, all that was on the tip of his tongue to be said—and only by an effort did he restrain the question, or the statement, that leaped to his lips. For half an instant his gaze flew towards Irwin, quickly

recalled and fixed on Margaret again. Composed as ever, a deep flush displacing the pallor of her cheek, she met his look with infinite repose and dignity. Yet both knew that neither was deceived, that both were aware of all.

Mr. Hilliard, with a self-control hardly to be expected from him, deftly turned the conversation by way of some commonplace inquiry of his host. It concerned his house, or its situation.

"Aye," said Arthur Ainslie, content to be thus again engaged, "it's a bonnie spot for a hoose—that's why I built it richt where the auld yin used to stand. But ye haena' seen the best o' 't. Ye'll ha'e to see the view frae the top—frae the up-stairs window, ye ken."

"That's exactly what I'd like to do," replied the affable Mr. Hilliard; "if there's one thing I like more than another, it's a view—let us go and see it now."

More than willing, his host rose from the table and bade him follow where he led. No sooner had the door closed behind them than Nora, her woman's intuition taking in every feature of the situation, excused herself on some slight pretext and went out on to the flower-covered porch that overlooked the meadow far beyond.

Irwin Menzies did not follow her. Instead, he

rose after a brief silence and came over to his mother's chair. It was beautiful to see; to any one, at least, who knew all the emotion that filled these two devoted hearts. Indeed, earth presents few spectacles more moving than this—the deep and loving loyalty of a strong and manly life towards her who gave it birth, handicapped though it be by the stain of dishonour, doomed—and through no fault of its own—to bear unto the end the heaviest part of the legacy of shame. When this, capable as it is of breeding a resentment not altogether unreasonable or unjust, and of furnishing a root of bitterness that found its unhappy soil before the life thus darkened had its being—when it turns, instead, to passionate tenderness, to unwavering sympathy and love, then the sorest of all human wounds has found a healing beyond the power of human contempt or cruelty to impair.

And such had come to Margaret Menzies. Darkened though her life had been; doomed though it was to a perpetual pall that haunted her every hour and overhung her at every step of life, it was yet hers to glory in the rich recompense of her son's strong and unfaltering love. And never had she felt it more than in this hour, an hour whose humiliation and pain were evidently as much his as they were her own.

He stood above her, one hand resting gently on her head. "Does he know, mother?" was all he said.

The head bowed lower. "Yes, my son; yes, he knows."

"You've seen him before?" he added, his voice shaking and hoarse.

"Yes, he was at Hawick—I think he taught a country school. He was there, when—when you were born," she faltered; "he was staying with a distant relative—where I often was—and I saw him several times," the voice breaking, a nameless emotion surging through it. "Oh, my son," she went on, the head going down to the table now, "it breaks my heart—not for myself at all—but for you, for you, my son, that you have to suffer for your mother's shame, you who have ——"

But he stopped her. Imperiously, with the strong authority of love, he hushed her words, taking her in his arms and caressing her to silence. "No mother was ever more to a son than you've been to me," he murmured in her ear, "and no son ever loved a mother more—or honoured her more," were the last words he whispered, when suddenly the sound of an opening door checked his speech, Nora reappearing with some cheery greeting, a bunch of fragrant flowers in her hand. "They're out," she cried gaily, "nearly all the spring flowers are blooming now—

I'm going out to gather some, while Mr. Ainslie is showing our friend the view," with a merry tilt of her chin towards the room aloft, whence issued the sounds of a very animated conversation.

" Where to, Nora?" asked Margaret Menzies, surveying with undisguised admiration the lithe and graceful form; she was swinging her bonnet to and fro, one hand already on the door.

" Oh, any place at all, Miss Menzies; wherever the spirit—and the flowers—lead me. Do lend me an apron, will you? There's nothing like an apron for gathering flowers. I think I'll go down through the sugar bush—that was always a favourite place for them. Take good care of the lecturer," she turned at the steps to direct; " father and I are very anxious about our star—and I won't be long," as she tripped away, leaving everything a little darker for her departure.

" She's a sweet somebody," Margaret said musingly as she followed the fast fleeing figure with her eyes; " she's as girlish, and as innocent, as the first day I saw her in the sleigh—the very day we came to the Glen."

Irwin ventured no opinion on this particular point. " I'd like to know," was his answer, " why she's fooling with that old fakir up-stairs there. Funny thing, isn't it—her father and Nora looking after a man

that's agitating to put them out of business, and trying to get him in good shape to lecture to-night—to talk against themselves, that's the mysterious part of it."

"Talk against them?" queried Margaret; "how, Irwin?"

"Oh, well, there's a move on foot—you must have heard of it—to shut up the taverns in Glen Ridge. And that Hilliard man is here to help it on. But Nora told me he brought a letter from some friend of her father's in Ireland—or had been in his old home, or something of that sort—so Dinny's idea of hospitality wouldn't permit anything but to take him in and look after him. He's too good for his job, is Nora's father—plenty of the men who are trying to oust him aren't fit to tie his boots."

"But that other one's a bad place, Irwin," ventured his mother—"the Queen's Arms, I mean."

"Oh, the one Jock Taylor keeps—yes, it's a low dive," agreed the son, shaking his head.

"I say, Irwin," his mother suddenly digressed, her eyes now turned towards the sugar bush, visible at the foot of the hill before the house, "I hope Nora'll be all right down there; but I see she's left her rubbers—and I'm sure it's damp in the woods. Lots of wet spots, aren't there?" as she picked the overshoes from the floor where the girl had left them.

"That's so," responded the youth, speaking as deliberately as he could; "it certainly is mighty damp, some places in there—and especially right where the trilliums grow. Those swampy spots are half water yet—but I guess she'll go around them."

There was a delightful little flush on Margaret Menzies' cheek. Did she remember? Doubtless so—nor could all the darkness of the days that had followed make the brightness of that long ago as though it had never been. "I really think she ought to have these, Irwin," she said gravely, holding up the rubber shoes in her hand; "don't you think you might spare time to run down with them, my son?"

He hesitated splendidly; as effectively as a maiden might have done. "I'm pretty busy, mother," he began seriously, "and that field really should be ploughed to-day—but, if you absolutely think she needs them—if you think I ought to?"

Margaret Menzies never smiled. "I really do," she said soberly; "it wouldn't matter for lots of girls—but Nora's a dainty thing, you know."

Irwin eyed his mother rather keenly as he took the shoes from her hand. But there was nothing in her face to confirm what he suspected; wherefore, with another word of mild protest, he took the little parcel from her hand and started towards the woods. "I'll

be right back," he announced, turning at the gate; "I'll come back as soon as I give these to her."

"Yes, I know," said Margaret Menzies; "come right back—of course, it may take some little time to find her; she went in right by that big pine tree—beside the rampike. But perhaps you saw her—good-bye, my son."

XI

THE CHASE—BY THE CEDAR CREEK

THE tall form swung vigorously on towards the stately woods in the distance, and the woman turned back to her waiting tasks. The dishes must be washed and things must be set to rights; all of which she proceeded to attend to, smiling once or twice as she caught fragments of the rather animated dialogue that was proceeding above stairs. And once or twice, too, she paused from her labours long enough to go out on the fragrant porch, her eyes shaded by her hand, and search the distant woods for any trace of the youth or maiden that were somewhere within its deep recesses. Not that she expected to see them, or to find them already retracing their steps—oh, no, Margaret Menzies knew the way of youthful feet too well for that; not yet had she herself travelled far enough from the paths of flower and blossom and deep protecting shade to forget the thrall they cast over two ardent hearts, all alone together when every month is May. So she sighed; then smiled; then struggled a moment with those tears that have their mysterious orbits in a woman's

eyes—then let them freely overflow, returning with plaintive intensity to her lowly tasks.

Meantime Irwin was pursuing the tender chase. Entering the woods he paused and looked about him—and really, brisk though his pace had been, it had not been sharp enough to justify that short, quick breathing that came from the parted lips as he stood rigid in his tracks and searched the shady ranges of the woods. What is it—let some philosopher reply—that stirs the heart to fever and quickens the brain to a kind of semi-madness when some ardent soul looks, and looks in vain, amid the mystic aisles of the forest, for that elusive one that yet is known to be there all the while; and that one watching, mayhap with love's detective craft, the very eyes that roam the leafy woods—so deserted while so populous, so silent while so vocal—for the sight that shall satisfy the hungry heart and turn the wilderness into a garden? Is it because this is a symbol of love's quest, a metaphor of all mating, as lonely hearts search the mazy glades of life—desolate until their search be fruitful—for the one blessed presence that is near them all the time; and which, suddenly appearing, starts all the flowers blooming and tunes every songster's voice to music never heard before?

His search unavailing, he whistled gently. This unsuccessful, he called her name, timidly, as one

might call along cathedral aisles. No answer came. He called again; he did not know, though all the forest knew, that no sweeter name could be launched through leafy groves, echoing and reëchoing there. "Nora!" surely no name could ring so musical through such embowered halls.

Still no answer came. Whereat he sat down on a fallen tree—ignoble use for prostrate monarch—and peered about him. Perhaps he was slightly irritated, so perverse is the heart of early manhood. Trace of dampness he saw none; but every moment deepened his conviction that she should be, and must be, protected from the moisture that *ought* to be in forests, even if just then it could not be found. Musing, he was still in doubt; he almost contemplated the advisability of return, yet sternly resolved—though himself unaware of it—that return he would not.

Suddenly, though full five minutes after his last call, he heard a low "coo-ee" from some hidden glade far beyond him. Whereat he started up, like some roe of the forest, and started in the direction of the sound with an ardour that would have done credit to the best of crusaders in the brave days of old. Coming near to what he considered the source of the sound, her name floated from his lips once or twice again; and once more a strange fever took

possession of him when no answer reached him but the echo of his voice. Two or three minutes later a faint note lent wings to his feet again, this time in a different direction—for the laws of forest life are mysterious and maddening. Again he called, his call again unanswered. But suddenly, his heart leaping at the sight, there fluttered before him for an instant, vanished like the flash of a butterfly's wing in the sun, the blue banner of a sash. He had seen it before, only a short half hour agone; but why, oh, why—let the philosopher again explain—was this particular millinery, so commonplace and unnoticed then, why was it now endowed with such sacred light, such mystic power to send his heart leaping and bounding within the cruel confines of a bosom as boisterous as a troubled sea?

Wonderful is the fleetness that can mark even a ploughman's feet! For Irwin bounded forward like a deer, his hands outstretched in unconscious eagerness. But the blue banner could still be seen, unretreating now; whereat, controlling himself, he covered the last portion of his chase with careful dignity, commanding a leisurely pace, even taking thought to thrust his hands into the pockets of his smock as he came down the slight decline that led to "The Cedar," for such was the name of the creek that flowed through the Ainslie farm.

And there she was, perched in the most nonchalant fashion on one of the biggest stones by the water's edge. "Hello," she said, looking up in violent surprise; "is that you? After flowers too?"

His smile was very faint. "You heard me call—you know you did," he said, looking reproachfully at her.

"You're dreadfully out of breath," she answered, the face twinkling as it was upturned from the stream—"anyhow, I answered you."

"Yes, and then you ran away," he returned, frowning, growing steadily sorrier for himself; "and I hadn't really any time to lose—I ought to be ploughing right now," jerking his head backward towards the distant field he had forsaken.

"Well, why didn't you plough? I told you, you know, that you weren't to let us interrupt you at all."

"It wasn't my doing," he answered, a little ungallantly; "mother coaxed me to come. She was afraid it might be wet down here, and she wanted me to bring you these—these—oh! what on earth have I done with those rubbers?" he exclaimed, turning his back full on the girl, still muttering as he searched the woods behind him.

The silvery laughter that flowed from her lips blended well with the tinkling brook. "You're sure

you haven't got them on yourself?" she suggested, the chime ringing again.

He stamped his foot. Nora could see the mighty shoe, and caught the gleam of the hobnails in its sole a moment. Another peal.

"Confound it," he mused, very red in the face, "I must have left them on that log—I sat down on a log, for a long time," he said, turning round to the girl, and there was something triumphant about the words; "yes, I sat down and rested a long time—and I must have left them there."

She frowned in great disconsolateness. "And you forgot all about poor little me," she reproached him, her eyebrows arching irresistibly; "oh, I understand, I understand all right, you sat down on a log—and you forgot there was such a person in the world as Nora Riley. Ah, well, that's just like a man—and I was in one *dreadful* wet place too," she affirmed, shaking her head most seriously. He could see the wind-blown hair reflected in the pure wave beneath.

"I'll go back and get them," he suddenly announced, starting as he spoke; "I won't be long—and it serves me right."

The maiden protested. "I don't want them," she cried after him; "I don't need them—and I won't wear them—and anyhow, one of them has a hole."

But he was gone with swift strides. She waited, gazing for a time into the brook at her feet. But soon it was *her* eyes that were searching the forest shade, *her* ears that were listening for the crackling footstep so long in coming. And the only difference between the searching two was that his was the face of strength and hers the face of beauty.

By and by he appeared, the delinquent articles in his hand. "Sorry to take so long," he said abruptly as he came up to the boulder on which she was seated; "but I found a broken piece in the fence—on the north side, as I went back—and I stopped to fix it. The sheep are in the outer field, you know."

"I didn't think you were long," she said; "but I don't want those things—although it certainly was thoughtful of your mother to make you bring them."

He made no answer, but knelt beside the rock and held out the rubber shoelets towards her. She gazed fixedly into the water. "There's a trout in there," she said; "I wish you had brought me a hook and line instead of those things—I can see him now, the aggravating creature," as she made a flourish that flashed the dweller of another world to his hiding-place beneath a near-by stone.

Without a word he extended a hand and laid hold of one tiny foot, idly swinging above the water's

edge. Then, awkwardly, bunglingly, he tried to adjust the rubber.

"You're tired out," she said sympathetically; "look how your hand's shaking."

"It's because I have to stand on these two stones," he answered, his breath coming fitfully; "the other foot, please."

"Aren't you glad I have only two?" Fishes must have ears, for as the girl's laughter sounded, the fugitive came out from his rocky cave and lay listening in mid-water, like the veriest eavesdropper. "And you've got them on wrong, as it is," she went on jauntily; "so you'll just have to take them off again —you've got them mixed up, they're on the wrong feet. So you'll have to take them off and put them on right—there," as she held one of them out in front of him. The listener from the wave floated near her as the girl's laughter rang again.

He flushed, no word escaping him as he obeyed her, stolidly proceeding to do as she said.

"Say, Irwin," she began before he had finished, "are you going to the party at the Dustans' to-morrow night—they say it's going to be a terribly stylish affair. Are you asked?—I'm not," shaking her head gravely, if not mournfully, as she gazed again into the stream.

He did not answer. "Are you going?" she repeated. "Did you get an invitation?—tell me, Irwin."

He lifted his serious eyes to hers. "Nora, are you trying to trifle with me? You know I'm not—you know I'm never asked to such places, and such affairs, as those. You know that as well as I do, Nora."

Her face, white and startled looking, showed that she understood him. Evidently he noticed her pain, for he asked quickly: "But why are *you* not invited?—that's what I want to know."

Perhaps the girl was glad of the opportunity his question gave her. At any rate her answer came with lightning speed. "I'm ruled out too—never now, never since I was a little girl. I used to get asked then," she added, sighing a truly womanly sigh. "But you know—you know, Irwin—I'm only a tavern-keeper's daughter. So I'm on the black list, you see—they don't want me any place now," the merry voice of a moment before now threatening to break with pain.

"What's that?" he said sharply. "I can understand—about me—and I despise the whole pack of them," he blurted out hotly; "but this about you—do you say it's about the, about The Buck Tavern, Nora?"

The girl nodded, ruefully. "That's it," she said; "some one told me Arthur Dustan said so himself."

"The contemptible puppy!" broke out Irwin; "but, Nora—I can't understand it—why, I saw him walking with you only the other evening?" and the strong young face was ashy pale as he waited for her answer.

The girl hesitated, colouring. "Yes," she began embarrassedly, "yes, he—he often does that, or wants to, at least. But it's quite a different matter when it comes to inviting one to their home. The Dustans are awful proud, Irwin," she pronounced, looking at him as if for confirmation of her words.

"Proud as peacocks," he said contemptuously "and barnyard peacocks at that—don't you know who his mother used to be, Nora?"

"No, tell me," the lithe form leaning forward in true feminine eagerness. "What about her, Irwin?"

"Well, I just will—she used to work at The Buck Tavern herself, long ago. Uncle Arthur told me so himself—used to make the beds, and cook the meals, and everything like that. Then she married him—Arthur's father, I mean. And he got rich—and then she thought she'd be aristocratic," he laughed scornfully. "Uncle Arthur despises them, I know—but

they think he's only an old farmer—and I despise them too," he went on hotly. "And there's another thing, Nora Riley—there's another thing—if I ever catch him walking with you again, I'll——" accompanied by a gesture of such violence as to send the eavesdropping trout into his city of refuge again at a speed never yet excelled by the fleetest of his kind.

Nora Riley's Irish blood leaped to her face. "You'll do nothing of the sort," she retorted vigorously; "I'd have you understand, sir, that I'm old enough, and wise enough, to take care of my own walking. What have you got to do with it, I'd like to know?" smiling in an exasperating way as she rose, standing erect on the stone at her feet. "I'm going to do a little walking right now," she went on coquettishly; "I'm going across on these," pointing to the other side of the boisterous stream—"I see some flowers over there—and I'm going to pick my own steps, this way," as she started, gathering up her skirts a little and stepping from stone to stone; "glad I've got those rubbers now—heigho! that was nearly a sousing," as she clambered on to a level stone in the centre of the brook.

He stood silent, surveying her as she stood looking in a dismayed sort of way as to where she should go next. The stones between her and the farther shore were very small and very slippery. Once or twice

she put out a dainty foot and touched the one nearest her; it rocked alarmingly. Still he stood, unspeaking.

Finally she turned upon him. "I thought you were a gentleman," she said warmly—"but I see how easy it is to be mistaken. You don't care if I get drowned, do you?—look there," as she pointed at the fleecy little waves about her feet. "I wish Arthur Dustan were here now," she blurted out hotly at last.

He winced, bit his lip, stood still. After another long look at him, the girl suddenly stamped her foot on the stone. "Come and help me, sir," she said imperiously; "you love to see me humble myself, don't you—just because I'm a poor defenseless woman?" the rosy lips pouting beyond all power to describe, the voice breaking in that fascinating way known to womanhood alone.

The hot blood surged to his face and the passion of his soul ran riot within him. Like a man in wrath he strode towards her, the water splashing high as he came. "Don't," she cried reproachfully, "oh, don't, Irwin—you'll be drenched, you'll get your death in this cold water—step on the stones, Irwin, step on the stones."

He heard her not, splashing on, his eyes fixed on the stream beneath him. Nor did he lift his face till

he was close beside her. "Give me your hand," he said hoarsely.

The delicate palm went out, resting confidingly in the man's strong, rough hand. He held it with a tenderness and tightness she could not help but feel, the touch inflaming his very soul. Thus holding her, wading recklessly along, he guided her from stone to stone; once she almost slipped, and, swaying unsteadily, her body touched him. Like a hungry thing his arms went out—barely touched the willowy form, then withdrawn by a mighty will. His face was pale when they got to the other side, and he turned away almost as if in anger when she began to thank him for his aid.

"I've got to go to my work now," he said brusquely; "there's a little foot-bridge higher up—there, at the foot of that elm you see beyond the knoll," and without another word he turned and strode back through the water, vanishing a moment later within the shadow of the woods.

The plough drave heavily that afternoon. Musing, his heart aflame within him, he followed the lumbering team up and down the field; an observer would have said that the ploughman's downcast eyes proved how faithfully he watched his furrow, nor have ever known that those eyes saw, instead, a fleecy brook, a maiden's sweetly pouting face, a dim-

pled arm outstretched, a form gently swaying towards himself—then away from him, far, so far away.

Suddenly he was roused from his reverie by the sound of horses' hoofs; looking up, he saw that horse and rider were coming in the lane, and, since he was already reining his steed, the latter evidently desired an interview with himself. So it proved to be, the horseman beckoning vigorously to Irwin to come on to where he waited by the fence. The ploughman hurried his laggard span and was soon near enough the end of the furrow to make out the face of his visitor. To his amazement, and considerably to his agitation, too, he saw it was none other than Arthur Dustan himself.

Curtly enough Irwin bade him the time of day, slowly climbing the fence and moving out beside him. A few commonplaces followed.

"I'll tell you what I rode out to see you for," began the visitor, tapping his leather leggings with his riding-whip; "it's about Dinny Riley—of course, I'm not particularly interested in him, as you'd naturally expect," the air of superiority heating Irwin's blood already. "Our paths don't exactly run parallel—as you know," he went on patronizingly, "but I want to do him a good turn if I can. And it's about this ranting temperance lecturer that's here—Hilliard's his name, you've heard about him—

and it seems he's moving heaven and earth to bring on a vote to put the saloon men out of business. Well, my idea is this—we calculate to put *him* out of business, coming round here and trying to stir up strife. So two or three of us are trying to arrange to get hold of him to-night before his lecture—and put him out of harm's way, till it's too late—and we thought a rail might be good enough for him to ride on—and we kind of fancied you wouldn't mind if we came out here and spent a couple of sociable hours, till the lecture time was past? So I thought I'd canter out and speak to you about it—besides, you're a pretty husky chap, and we thought you'd be just the man to lend us a hand at the business."

Dustan paused, looking into the other's face for an answer. Irwin shook his head, stroking the horse's silky mane, but never looking at the man above him. "Your little scheme doesn't appeal to me," he said after a minute or two of silence. "And, if you do carry it out, mind you don't come near here," his glance now turning, a little darkly, up to the man in the saddle. "Hilliard's a friend of mine."

"What's that?" exclaimed Dustan, "a friend of yours?—he is, like the ——"

"That's what he is," Irwin answered stolidly, "in fact, he's a guest of ours—we're entertaining him to-day."

Dustan straightened up and sat back in his saddle. A low whistle escaped his lips. "Heigho!" he said, "so that's what's trump, is it? I heard that the two of them—he and the Riley girl—went into the country to-day. That's what made me hot at him, to think the whiskey sellers are so good to him, and then he tries to swamp them. Is he at the house now, Menzies?" turning and looking over his shoulder towards the farmhouse.

Irwin nodded. "Uncle's showing him the view," this with a faint grin.

Dustan leaned over the saddle. Surely that was a leer, and sinister enough, on his face. Irwin felt in his heart what was coming; his hands clutched feverishly at the horse's mane.

"And where's the little fairy—in the house too?"

"You talk like a fool," said Irwin, struggling to control himself. "I don't know what you mean."

"Oh, come now, Menzies, don't get grouchy—besides, you know all right. Is Nora at the house too?—she left town with him this morning. I found that out all right," as he turned and looked once more towards the farmstead.

"No, she isn't," came the indiscreet answer, "so you may save yourself the trouble of going over; she's in the woods, gathering flowers—and there are

four fences between here and there," he added, smiling defiantly up at him. A moment later he could have plucked out his tongue, remorseful at this unguarded speech.

The other gathered up the lines. "Suits me exactly," he said mockingly—"Juno here would sooner take a fence than eat his oats. By Jove, I'll just go on and give her a hand—I want to have a talk with her anyhow," he continued, with another leer, "want to talk over the temperance subject with her. Ha, ha! that's a good one—yes, by Jove, that *is* a good one."

"You're not going," said Menzies, his face darkening, his eye fixed like a storm-cloud on the man above him.

"Hoity-toity!" laughed Dustan, already turning his horse, "this is a pretty time of day—does he want all the beauties to himself, I wonder. Private park of your own, eh, Menzies?" and he laughed coarsely at his joke. "I'll stop on my way back and tell you how I got along—this won't be the first time I've had a little tête-à-tête with a pretty maiden in the May woods—we're both young, you know, Menzies," and he winked at Irwin with an expression whose meaning the other could not fail to catch.

"You contemptible cad," fairly hissed from between the ploughman's teeth as he leaped towards

the man in the saddle; "you infernal hound—I'll show you where you'll go," as he seized the horse by the bridle-rein, holding it with one hand as he worked his way back to the rider. With one swift cut Dustan brought his riding-whip full across his assailant's face. Half blind, and letting go his hold of the rein, Irwin seized his enemy with both hands, greedily, wrenching him bodily from the saddle to the ground. In a moment he had him by the throat, the whip in his other hand—which, in a blind kind of fury, he applied to the prostrate form before him till Dustan's yells and his own sense of mercy gave him pause. The horse had leaped a few paces from the struggling pair, snorting excitedly where he stood. Irwin leaped towards it, frightened it with a shout, and made an unavailing cut at it with the whip as it bounded like an arrow on its way towards town.

"There," he said, as he turned back and surveyed the cringing form now risen to its feet; "now you can go—but you'll go the same way your horse went—or there's more for you. Here," as he tore a rail from the fence and heaved it contemptuously towards Dustan, "ride home on that—it was your own idea, you mind—now go," and he stood glowering at him till the retreating figure was beyond the lane and well on the way towards home.

XII

MR. HILLIARD CONVALESCENT—AND COMMUNICATIVE

WHILE all this was going on—amid the flowery glades of the sugar bush or on the dusty scene of conflict just described —Arthur Ainslie and his loquacious visitor were having an interesting time in the upper room to which they had repaired, as will be remembered, when dinner was concluded. "This is aye the view I show the first," announced the Scotchman gravely, having gained the attic, as he led his guest to the east window; "it's mebbe no' sae graun' as yon," pointing over his shoulder to the window looking south, "but it's mair imposin', I tell ye that—look, yonner's the graveyard; see, ayont that wee hillock—it's mebbe twa miles frae here, but ye hae a graun' view o' 't a bonnie day like this. An' there's mair folk there, sleepin', than there is in a' Glen Ridge; I counted them no' lang since—on a holiday, an' I had a graun' day o' 't. Aye, it's a wonnerfu' view, is it no', Mr. Hilliard? Can ye mak oot yon monyment in the middle?—weel, I was a bearer at that funeral; the

corpse asked me himsel', the week afore he died," and Arthur Ainslie turned with pardonable pride to find his visitor listening with wide-open mouth and a very startled pair of eyes.

"I don't care much for that kind of a view," the lecturer responded; "it doesn't cheer a man up very much."

"That's no' what we're here for," answered Arthur Ainslie; "that's no' the Creator's will."

"It keeps a man too mindful of what's ahead of him," enlarged Mr. Hilliard.

"That's what we should be aye thinkin' on," returned the Scotchman—"for it's aheid o' us onyway, sae it's better to be mindfu'. Ah, weel, we'll gang to the ither window, Mr. Hilliard. Mebbe it'll please ye better. It's graun', my man, it's fair overpowerin'," as he turned and preceded him up a couple of steps that led to the topmost gable window. "Look ye there, an' say if ye ever laid eyes on a finer view than that—ye'd find yon hard to beat in bonnie Scotland itsel', to say naethin' o' Canady—is it no' graun', man?" as he waved his hand towards the panoramic scene, a truly noble vista, hill and plain and valley and stream, and silent stately woodland, all beguiling the eye onward till at last it rested on far distant uplands that seemed to blend with the horizon and the clouds.

Mr. Hilliard, however, for some mysterious reason,

did not seem to be in a scenic mood. Restless, ill at ease he was, as though something were lacking that was sorely needed. Very languidly he surveyed the view before him. "Yes, it's pretty enough," he said, suppressing a yawn.

The old Scotchman's eyes flashed fire, and he turned almost savagely on his companion. "If that's a' ye've got to say—if ye canna' find fittin' speech for yin o' the Creator's glories—ye'd better haud yir whisht," he said sternly. "'Pretty!'" dwelling scornfully on the tawdry word, "like ye was speakin' o' a lassie's doll! Why, man," he went on impatiently, as he noted his vistor's wandering eye, "ye're no' thinkin' o' the view at a'—what's takkin' yir attention noo?" for Mr. Hilliard's gaze was very intently fixed on something in the farthest corner of the room.

"That," admitted the lecturer frankly, "that box over there—there, behind that old leather trunk. That's a case of medicine, is it, Mr. Ainslie?" moving down the steps from the gable and drifting by a sure and certain law of gravitation towards the object in question.

"Weel, that's what it's used for," acknowledged Arthur Ainslie, accompanying his friend closely; "that's *speerits*, in yon bottle, Mr. Hilliard—an' ye'll no' be pleased to hear it, nae doot—but that's what it is, a' the same. An' I'm no' ashamed o' 't. I'm no

taster, mind ye—in fact, I'm a teetotaller, forbye in cases o' needcessity; sae, in case o' a chill, or a fever, or if ye get bit wi' a dog, or if a buddy gets wet through wi' the rain, or chokit up wi' dust at the threshin', or if ye get kickit wi' a beast, or hae the toothache, ye ken—or mebbe a buddy tak's a faintin' spell, or canna' digest his victuals, or has a wee bit colic in his insides, or gets sair news aboot a friend, or mebbe he canna' sleep, or has disturbin' dreams, or tak's a sunstroke, or gets nippit wi' the frost in the winter time —or tak's a chill, or a fever ——"

"You mentioned both of those before," interrupted Mr. Hilliard, his eye still fixed abstractedly on the square box beneath him. The neck of one of the vessels within it could be seen protruding.

"Aye, nae doot," returned the Scotchman composedly, "they're the commonest, ye ken—but I'm no taster, as I tellt ye. An' my faither was the same," he continued proudly; "he never meddled speerits, forbye it was for yin or ither o' thae—thae diseases, an' yin or twa mair I didna' mention."

"He must have been quite an invalid," returned Mr. Hilliard, running his tongue along a pair of very dry lips; "but that was certainly a fine line of diseases—they're all hereditary."

"I dinna' ken onythin' aboot that," responded his host, deferential to the word, "but there's yin thing I

dae ken—ony man wha tak's it for onythin' but medicine, he's makin' a beast o' himsel'."

"Yes, yes," said Mr. Hilliard impatiently; "and so that's why you keep it in the attic, Mr. Ainslie?"

"I keep it oot o' folks' way," answered the Scotchman promptly; "there's nae temptation, wi' it here—if ye kept it doon-stairs, ye ken, folk wad be takkin' sick every time they cam' to visit ye—they keep far healthier when they dinna' see the, the medicine, afore their eyes," and Arthur Ainslie indulged a feeble smile.

"You don't feel any of those symptoms now, Mr. Ainslie—you don't happen to have a pain about you just at present, do you?" suggested Mr. Hilliard, drawing a little closer to his host and looking solicitously into his face.

Arthur Ainslie's answer was almost stern. "No," he said, his voice full of reproach, "no, sir—I'm no' that kind o' a man."

Mr. Hilliard sighed, cast a lingering glance on the treasure box before him, then turned and gazed out of the window in a perplexed and despairing way. Suddenly his eye beamed with the new-born light of hope; gesticulating eagerly, he called his host to the window. "Look, Mr. Ainslie, look," he cried —"there—just beyond the stack; that cow, you see —it's got its head through the fence and can't get it

back. I believe it's choking—look, see how it's twisting and squirming."

He had no need to dwell on the peril of the situation; for Arthur Ainslie, careful husbandman, took in the circumstances at a glance, and with a brief "the stupid beastie—it'll wring its ain neck if I dinna' get it oot," disappeared swiftly down the stairs on his expedition of relief; leaving his guest alone ——!

It was not more than a quarter of an hour or so before he was back again, panting a little from his exertions as he climbed the stairs, and murmuring some incoherent narrative of the proceedings. But he found the lecturer a new man, refreshed and inspired, with returning zest for life!

"I've been taking in the view since you went away, Mr. Ainslie," he began volubly as his host returned; "and I find I was quite mistaken—what an ungrateful guest you must have thought me—I've just been drinking in the wonderful prospect," he expatiated, waving his hand grandly in the direction of the window, "and I'm bound to say I never saw a sublimer panorama in my life—those glorious trees, the infant grass, so pure and tender, the meandering stream winding like a many-coloured ribbon through the peaceful valley, the modest flowers—they're heaven's thoughts towards us, Mr. Ainslie—the noble hills lifting their heads up to the clouds that bend to

kiss their brows, and the whole landscape blending with the azure blue—the union of earth and sky, as I call it, Mr. Ainslie—I marvel at my brutal indifference. But how changed it all is when the sun comes out, my dear friend," he went on affectionately; "the sun came out in a sudden burst of glory just after you left me—I was watching from the window; just as you were pulling that brute back by its—by its tail, Mr. Ainslie, rescuing it nobly from its dangerous predicament, for it might have kicked you to death, Mr. Ainslie. Oh, yes, it's a beautiful day this—and a beautiful view—and a beautiful world, I might say, Mr. Ainslie, if we only had the lightened eye to see it," he concluded, quite out of breath by now, and unable longer to conceal the emotion that possessed him.

Arthur Ainslie gazed in amazement. "Ye're wrang wi' yir facts," he answered stolidly after a minute's pause; "I didna' gang near the tail o' the beast—wha ever heard tell o' the like? I pit it back by the heid; I tappit it ower the nose wi' a stick, ye ken."

"Yes, yes," broke in the other enthusiastically; "you took the bull by the horns, like the brave yeoman that you are—that's what I meant when I said the tail. But about the view—I took another look at the graveyard, too, Mr. Ainslie; and I saw it all

in a different light. How subduing, how humbling, yet how inspiring, to see where the rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep. I gazed at them long, Mr. Ainslie—and the words of the poet *would* come to my mind: 'The paths of glory lead but to the grave.'"

Arthur Ainslie stood contemplating the man before him, the keen eyes twinkling as they first surveyed the effusive lecturer, then slowly turned till they rested on the box and its contents in the corner.

"Ye've been ha'ein' a pain yirsel', ha'e ye no'?" he said, pawkily.

"What's that?" replied Mr. Hilliard straightway, looking everywhere except towards that particular corner.

"Ye're quite an invalid yirsel', I mean," explained the canny Scot, still gazing at the source of supply; it gave abundant signs of the recent interview.

"I don't understand you, sir," retorted the lecturer, a note of indignation in the tone this time; "I'll be obliged if you'll explain, sir."

"There's naethin' to explain aboot," returned the old man quietly; he moved closer to Mr. Hilliard as he spoke, sniffing as accurately as was consistent with courtesy; "only I was thinkin' mebbe ye'd been ta'en wi' yin o' thae diseases—I thocht I catched the smell o' medicine, ye ken," smiling ami-

ably into the now frowning countenance of his friend.

"Do you mean, sir," his guest began stormily, "do you mean to insinuate that I've been—been touching your box—your box containing the infernal stuff; the stuff, sir, that turns a man into a beast, that robs him of his God-given powers; that clothes the home in rags and sinks the widow in despair—I mean, that sinks the home and clothes the widow—either one, both—that takes the bread out of the orphan's mouth, and ——"

"We'll gang doon-stairs," said Arthur Ainslie quietly, turning as he spoke. "Ye dinna' ken what ye're sayin'."

A kind of howl, half rage, half remonstrance, came from the lips of the orator. With a quick movement he put himself between his companion and the stair, then turned and peered into the other's face; indeed, in his eagerness to fix his attention, he seized the Scotchman by both shoulders as he broke out, his lips trembling in excitement: "I don't know what I'm saying, don't I? Well, that settles me," his voice shaking, but less with anger than with agitation. "There's something I *do* know, Mr. Ainslie—and I wasn't going to let you know I knew. At least, I was in doubt about it. But now I'll let you see I know more than you think for—

perhaps more than you do yourself, about the whole affair."

He stopped, peering into the Scotchman's astonished face. "I dinna' ken what ye're meanin'—ye'd better speak plain oot," came in a panting kind of intensity from the startled man. He moved backward a step or two as he spoke, for something of ghostly import seemed to look out at him from the eyes fixed so greedily on his own—like a white face through a lattice in the dark.

"Ah!" breathed Hilliard heavily, "I thought I'd get your interest. Well, I won't disappoint you—it's about your niece."

"My niece!" echoed the shaking voice of the old man; "is it Margaret ye're meanin'?" though his blanched face told full well that he knew it could be no other.

"Yes," returned his guest with a jerk of the head; the muddled garrulousness of a few minutes before seemed to have disappeared with the quickening of this sharp encounter; "yes, she's the only one you've got—so far as I know. And I know all about *her*, sir," a sort of maudlin grin returning for a moment, as quickly repressed. "I've seen her at Hawick—lots of times. And the boy—I never saw *him* before—but I heard about him often enough," and he smiled significantly into the ashy face before

him. "I heard all about it—about the whole business—and nobody blamed her, I'm bound to say that," he added, shaking his head in the most magnanimous way.

"Whisht ye," said the Scotchman in a low, stern voice; "she'll hear ye—she's doon the stair," grief and tenderness mingling in the words.

"Wouldn't hurt her feelings for the world," was the reply; "as I said, nobody blamed *her*."

The Scotchman's movement towards him was almost cat-like, and a strange stealthiness of purpose was visible all over his face—anguish, passion, a deep sort of cunning too, were all written there.

"Wha *did* they blame?" he asked, his voice a hoarse whisper.

"They blamed *him*, of course—who else?" promptly replied the lecturer.

"Ye mean the faither—Irwin's faither—it'll be him ye're meanin'?" said the old man, drawing closer still.

The other nodded.

"Div ye ken him?"

"Never saw him. But I know who he was—who he is—all right; everybody over there knew—and I think you've seen him yourself. He lives not so far from here."

The Scotchman's breath was coming quickly and heavily. "Tell me his name," he said, standing

rigidly still and straight, his frame quivering a moment later as he waited.

"Don't you know?"

Arthur Ainslie shook his head.

"I told you I knew something you didn't," retorted the other, a touch of resentment in his voice; "even if you did accuse me of ——"

"Yon has naethin' to dae wi' this," interrupted the Scotchman sternly; "gi'e me the man's name, I tell ye."

Mr. Hilliard paused for nearly a minute, the suspense enjoyable. But Arthur Ainslie never took his eyes from his face; raptly fixed, half appealing and half demanding, they seemed to wait for the word as a tiger waits for his prey to leap from the jungle.

Suddenly the lecturer leaned over and whispered in his ear.

The blood rushed back to Arthur Ainslie's livid face; he seemed almost to rise a moment from where he stood, so violent was the convulsion that wrung his frame. Then, relaxing, he reeled as if about to fall, Mr. Hilliard involuntarily putting forth his hands to steady him.

"'McLarty,' did ye say? Is that the name—tell me, man, tell me again; for God's sake, dinna' keep me standin' here," as his outstretched hand, trembling, grasped the other by the wrist.

"That's the name," Hilliard answered in a low voice. Something else he added, in a tone that could scarcely be heard.

"Aye, I ken—I ken—I ken him fine," the old man gasped excitedly; "aye, Peter McLarty was his brither—him that died lang syne. An' that's what made David sae rich—he cam' intil his brither's wealth when he died. Ye ken where he lives, div ye no'?"

"Not exactly," returned the lecturer, "but I know it's some place not so very far from here—I've heard the name of the town, I think, but I've forgotten it."

"Wad ye ken if ye heard it—is it Hastie's Mills?"

"Yes, yes," was the prompt reply; "yes, that's it—that's certainly it."

There was no chair in the attic, nor bench, nor anything to which a stricken man might stagger and sit down, except those two or three steps that led up to the gable window. And the words that made him certain of the worst had hardly fallen on his ear—identifying the dread McLarty beyond a doubt—before Arthur Ainslie had shambled over to the little stair and sunk down upon it with his face between his hands. A deadly pallor had overflowed his cheek, and his lips were the hue of death. So short and quick was his breathing, and so evident were the tokens of distress, that Mr. Hilliard became instantly

alarmed. Hurrying over to him he inquired, and not without much solicitude, as to the cause of this sudden collapse.

He had not far to seek. The reticence of his race, and the habit of a lifetime, yielded before this billow that had so suddenly broken on the old Scotchman's defenseless head. "He's ruined us baith, I'm dootin'," he murmured, "Margaret an' me. *It's him that has the mortgage!*"

"The mortgage?" exclaimed Mr. Hilliard, still stooping over the bended form.

"Aye, the mortgage—on this new hoose, ye ken. I builded it afore I was ready—afore I had a' the money. It was for Margaret's sake; no' that she wantit it—but I didna' think the auld yin was cozy eneuch for her. Sae I borrowed the money—an' it was frae him, frae McLarty, in Hastie's Mills. But I didna' ken," the old man went on, straightening up and shaking his fist fiercely at some imaginary foe; "I'd hae lived wi' the beasts i' the barn afore I'd hae ta'en a shillin' o' his cursed money—if I had kent he was Margaret's destroyer. I never tellt her aboot it—an' I dinna' think she kens he's there at a'. Oh! oh, I'm wae to think on 't—I'm wae to think on 't," and the pathos of the broken voice was deep and moving as the old man sat with hidden face, rocking to and fro.

Mr. Hilliard was quite at a loss; how to comfort his friend he knew not. But, after a minute of perplexed silence, a possible expedient suggested itself. "You're in pain, are you not, Mr. Ainslie?" he murmured tenderly, bending lower in his solicitude.

"It's anguish I'm in," responded the Scotchman tersely.

"That's what I thought; and, perhaps—perhaps you'd be the better, Mr. Ainslie, the better of a little of—of that medicine over there," he suggested, looking towards the dispensary with an expression that would indicate he was in mortal agony himself.

"I unnerstaun' ye," returned his host without looking up—"but it's no' for this kind o' a pain. Oh! it's wae I am, to think on 't," still rocking back and forward.

"Well, perhaps this comes under the head of—of 'bad news about a friend,'" pursued the other, still hoping against hope that he had now located a fitting malady.

But none of these things moved the stricken Scotchman. "There's nae cure for a broken heart," he said with bitter emphasis. "I canna' meet it," he crooned wailingly to himself; "I canna' pay it—an' he'll put me an' Margaret on the pairish—he's ruined Margaret, an' noo he's ruined me. But God Almichty 'll be his judge," he cried with sudden pas-

sion, rising to his feet and stalking to the window; "it's ower there he lives—thirty mile ayont that risin' hill. An' Jehovah 'll be his Judge—He'll speak wi' him in the gate. An' he'll find, when it's ower late, that his path leads doon to Hell," the old man's voice rising like the winter wind—"an' sudden tribulation shall come upon him, like travail on a woman wi' child—an' he shall not escape," standing now in spectral stillness, his long arm and bony forefinger pointing far beyond the distant hill. "Noo I'll gang till my work," he added a moment later, his voice strangely soft and low; "an' ye'll gang back to the toon—the lassie's here; I heard her speakin' wi' Margaret on the porch," as he beckoned to the wondering man and led the way down the narrow stair.

XIII

HOW DINNY COACHED THE ORATOR

NEITHER one was without ample food for reflection as Nora and Mr. Hilliard retraced their footsteps to Glen Ridge. But few words broke the silence, each mentally employed, each little aware of what engrossed the other's thoughts. Nora took it for granted that the lecturer was silently rehearsing the oration whose delivery was due a few hours hence.

The lecturer, however, was but little concerned therewith; his thoughts were occupied with the distressing situation Mr. Ainslie had disclosed to him —to say nothing of even more insistent troubles of his own. Which were not lacking. For the drought which so often had mastered him before had settled once more upon his inward parts —and his chief concern at present was as to how it should be quenched. Hope of relief from the copious shelves or generous cellar of The Buck Tavern he knew there was none; for between him and bliss there arose the forbidding Irish form of Dinny Riley, proprietor and dispenser though he

was. But just as they had passed the outskirts of the town, a glorious inspiration seizing him, he struck out with quickened pace and buoyant step, his head erect, his eye aglow; and Nora had all she could do to prevent being left behind.

"Oh," he suddenly began, as though he had forgotten her, "I find I have to hurry—I've got a little matter I must attend to before I go home. Almost forgot all about it, we've had such a pleasant day. It's in a—a place of business, just round a couple of blocks. And I won't be long; you tell your father I'll be home presently."

"I'm not in a hurry," replied the girl, solicitous lest he should suspect; "I'll just go round with you —I'm not tired at all, Mr. Hilliard."

"Couldn't hear of it," rejoined the man excitedly; "it's too far for you. And besides," lowering his voice ominously, "it's a transaction with a man—and it's partly financial," he announced, happy in the timely thought; "it involves a money consideration —not much, of course, but it's financial all the same."

This, as he expected, put an end to Nora's remonstrance; and Mr. Hilliard disappeared from view at the next corner, effusive in his promises of quick return. The transaction was duly completed—at the Queen's Arms Tavern—and through the medium

of a sympathetic lounger on the corner, well pleased with the generous toll that constituted the reward for his services as purveyor.

In consequence of all which, Mr. Hilliard *did* arrive home in due time, it is true, but in a condition that threw poor Dinny into a state of agitation not easily to be described.

"Wouldn't that give ye palpitation av the gizard, now?" exclaimed the proprietor of The Buck Tavern as his eyes, after anxious watching, at length fell upon the meandering form of the lecturer of the evening, making his way by many and devious routes towards the hostelry in the distance. "An' him billed to lecture at eight o'clock to-night—on timperance, too! Sure, the folks'll blame it all on me—they'll say I wanted to make a livin' show o' the man afore the neighbours because he's agin our business," with which and several other sentiments inaudibly expressed, Dinny strode forth to meet his returning guest.

"Tired," murmured Mr. Hilliard as the Irishman came close, "I'm so tired—I think I'm sick; I believe I've got one of those diseases."

"What the divil d'ye mean?" was Dinny's sole response; "come on home wid ye—sure it's meself will put the repairs on ye," taking the arm of the now lachrymose orator and supplying the sense of

direction which seemed to have become extinct within him.

Half an hour later various sounds, suggestive of hurried convalescence, emerged from Mr. Hilliard's little room up-stairs. "It's hot, it's too hot—please pour some cold water into it," came the voice of the public benefactor.

"Divil a dhrop—I'm not that kind av a man," was Dinny's retort. "I niver put watter in a man's dhrink in my life—my father kep' The Black ——"

"Don't—don't rub so hard, Mr. Riley. I'll drink the rest of the coffee, if you won't rub so hard—I'm not a Clydesdale horse. No, I won't move another step—I tell you I'm tired walking up and down the room."

"That's what works it out o' ye," Dinny assured him—"ye'll stiffen up an' founder, if ye don't keep movin'. What kind av a timperance lecture could ye give to-night—as full av yer subject as ye are?" Dinny demanded with a broad grin; "come on wid ye—sure it's a heavy sweat ye're needin'. There, jump over that wood box—now back agin. I'll hold ye. Here, more coffee—sure it's killin' the germs inside o' ye, it is."

"Let me lie down a minute," pleaded the orator; "I read in a book once that you should always lie on

your back when you're—when you're sick—it distributes the blood more evenly, it said," sidling towards a very inviting bed.

"I'll distribute ye," said Dinny; "quick, march. Sure I want to get the coffee up and down ye, from yer head to yer toes. That's the only thing that's anny good for the pizen they keep at the Queen's Arms—low, ondacent dive," he muttered contemptuously. "Here, keep movin' on—sure it's Dinny Riley that's goin' to keep faith wid the public to-night," as he seized the arm so often held aloft in oratorical achievement, and bore his guest forward on the double quick.

"Ouch!" suddenly roared Mr. Hilliard; "that hurts—you tramped on my foot—and I've got a corn."

"I didn't do annything o' the sort—ye walked unner me," retorted Dinny stoutly; "it's inside av ye ye've got the corn. Come on, ye're gettin' *distributed* all right. Here, d'ye see that there crack—when ye can walk that, an' when ye can talk straight, ye'll be able to lecture all right. Stiddy, now—don't fall off. There, ye're doin' fine—sure it's the proud man I'll be when ye're struttin' up an' down the platform to-night, jawin' the natives on 'The Barroom in the Home.' Here, take another swig o' the coffee—an' try an' sweat; that's what'll

fix ye up like a mornin' glory—why the divil don't ye sweat?"

"I can't," moaned the lecturer; "I've been doing my best. But I'm not well—I've got two or three of those diseases. And besides, it don't run in our family—none of the Hilliards ever sweat—it doesn't go with the oratorical temperament, I tell you."

While these were the exact words of Mr. Hilliard, they yet convey no idea of the thickness of utterance with which they were delivered. And this Dinny had duly remarked.

"Ye're in no fit state to lecture yet," he declared, in response to Mr. Hilliard's oft-repeated assurance of the completeness of his cure. "Sure they wouldn't unnerstand half o' what ye said. Say 'systematic,'" demanded Dinny; "pronounce the word, I mean."

The orator plunged in and did his best.

"Ye sound like a steam pipe," snorted Dinny contemptuously. "Try it agin."

Mr. Hilliard did try again, with slight symptoms of improvement. Again and yet again Dinny insisted on the rehearsal, till by and by the word was fairly intelligible.

"Now say 'suspicion,'" Dinny ordered, standing with his head cocked a little to one side, to judge of the result.

The eloquent one wrestled with it as best he could.

"Ye sound like a bottle o' ginger ale when ye open it in August," was Dinny's doleful verdict. "Here, take some more coffee,—there's nothin' settles the grounds, inside o' ye, like a swig o' coffee. Now tackle that word again."

Which Mr. Hilliard essayed. And, after repeated attempts, he partially subdued the sibilants.

"Now say 'sarsaparilla,'" Dinny directed with the air of Socrates; "when ye can say that—ye're well," with which he sat down on the bed, aware that this would be a struggle of more than ordinary length.

The orator groaned aloud. "I won't," he affirmed stoutly; "besides, it has nothing to do with my speech—it's foreign to my line of thought."

"It ain't annything o' the sort," retorted Dinny; "it's a dacent timperance dhrink—an' ye've got to get it down."

The patient still protesting, Dinny laid his hand upon the coffee-pot. "An' I'll rub ye besides—an' we'll go for another walk, mind ye," he affirmed; "I'll make ye sweat if it takes a week—sure it's due to the public."

Whereupon the orator waded heroically in, right in among the farthest recesses of the word; as a swimmer breasts the wave, he confronted the entangling task. After backing up several times and

beginning again, he finally scrambled up the farther shore, turning now to look triumphantly at Dinny.

"Ye sounded like a pair o' ganders," said Dinny sadly; "sure ye'll have to do better than that. Once more, now—keep yer tongue aff yer teeth. There, that's better; that's fit for Daniel O'Connel himself," as the desperate declaimer flew at the word and floundered through it again and again in a frenzy of articulation. "But I want to hear some av yer speech—just to see if ye get the parts together, like. Go on, now—let us hear what ye have to say regardin' 'The Barroom in the Home.' I'll stop ye when ye're aff the track."

After sundry protests and counter-protests the orator began. Reluctant at first, his passion kindled as he proceeded and soon he was in full swing, the well-worn rhetoric flowing like a river.

Dinny suddenly stopped him in the middle of a most affecting passage. "Quinch a few o' those widows' tears," he advised earnestly; "an' go aisy on them broken hearts, an' them fireplaces widout anny fire, an' them graves wid the best brains av Canady clothed in rags in them, an' the fair youth o' the land wid a breath on them like a distillery—leave a lot o' them out, I tell ye."

"What for?" inquired the reformer, seizing the opportunity to recover breath.

"That stuff's all right for ould Ireland," was Dinny's rejoinder, "where the people have hearts in them the size av a turnip—but it isn't anny good wid a lot o' Scotch. Here's the way to go at a crowd av Scotchmen, if ye want to make 'em cry. I'll show ye—watch me. 'Ladies an' gintlemen,'" Dinny declaimed, striking a truly oratorical attitude, "'what's the cause av the dhrink bill av our country? Sure it's of a double charackter. First, a desire for strong dhrink; second, a desire for more. That's the reason, ladies an' gintlemen, we spend five hundred million dollars in whiskey every year. An' *then* we don't get our money's worth, ladies an' gintlemen. The adultheration av honest liquors is a disgrace to the memory av our forefathers—an' it costs us like the divil into the bargain. Sure there was a toime when ye got it pure an' sparklin' for twinty-five cents a gallon—now it's siventy-five, an' half the men that sells it slips a pint o' watter into it unbeknownst to us, an' then works short change on us besides. Look at the cost av it! Fifty million dollars last year for workhouses an' hospitals; sixty million dollars this year for jails an' pinitentiaries; siventy million dollars next year for lunattic asylums—an' who pays the shot, ladies an' gintlemen, but honest Scotchmen like yerselves whose fathers an' grandfathers died for the faith o' their ancestors that died and left all they

had to yez? For their sakes, ladies an' gintlemen, I ax ye to vote to quinch the stream av blood an' rags that flows down our streets an' dhrowns widows an' orphans wid its gory hand—an' also, ladies an' gintlemen, because it's cheaper! I appeal to yez in the sacred name av Expinse.'" Dinny paused, partially exhausted. "That's the way to talk to Scotchmen," he concluded, puffing slightly from the recent effort, "if ye want to make them cry. Sure I know the craturs."

Mr. Hilliard gazed in amazement. "I'll think about it," he said after a moment, seeing that Dinny expected some reply—"if you'll only let me lie down a while," glancing tenderly towards his bed; "I want to collect my thoughts for the lecture."

"They're disturbed, like?" suggested Dinny.

"Besides," the lecturer went on, paying no attention to the unseemly levity, "if you'll only let me lie down, I'll tell you something interesting I found out about your friend—that farmer friend of yours —to-day."

"D'ye mean Arthur Ainslie?"

"No one else. Sit down a minute—there, on the foot of the bed—till I tell you something I've found out." The orator, meantime, had assumed a horizontal attitude on the selfsame bed.

Dinny obeyed, his curiosity decidedly aroused.

"I've seen that woman before," Mr. Hilliard began abruptly.

"What woman?" asked Dinny.

"His niece—Mr. Ainslie's niece. Miss Menzies, you know. And I saw that boy of hers too—and *I know who his father is.*"

Dinny was standing now, and closer to the head of the bed. And thus, looking down into his informant's face, he heard the whole story of all that had been disclosed that day. Very white he was, as the narrative drew near its close, dealing as it did with the financial embarrassment of his old and tried friend, Arthur Ainslie, and with his obligation to the man McLarty, of Hastie's Mills.

"An' so the old man is afraid this buzzard—this McLarty man—is goin' to turn him off his farm, out on the road, is he?" Dinny's lips fixed and pale, "to eat grass, I dunno? The low-lived bird o' prey!" Dinny went on, his wrath deepening, "schemin' till he got my old friend in his clutches—it's damned I'll be if he manages his dirty trick. He'll take the shirt aff *my* back afore he'll ruin Arthur Ainslie," he muttered savagely; "it's myself'll find out all about this dirty business—an' it's myself that'll do somethin'—if it takes ivery cint I've got," shaking his head in the intensity of his purpose.

Mr. Hilliard nodded, drowsily. The horizontal attitude pleased him well—and coffee, even by the tankful, was but a feeble stimulant to him.

Dinny turned away. "Ye can go to sleep if ye want to," he said under his breath, his eye gleaming from the inward fire, "but I won't—by God, I won't," he added solemnly. "You wait an' see if I do," as he turned towards the stair, muttering as he went, and pausing midway to conduct a colloquy with some unseen antagonist. "As dacent a man as iver drew the breath o' life!—a man that's befrinded me manny's the time—an' ye'd turn him out to starve, would ye, ye vulture, ye?" as he went on his way still conducting the muffled dialogue.

XIV

MUSIC HATH CHARMS—SOMETIMES

HE had just gained the hall below when Nora came out to him through the swinging door that led into the kitchen, her cheeks rosy from her labours. "Father," she began, "was it you that locked the sitting-room door?—I can't get in."

"Yes, my darlint," he answered, the cloud lifting from his face for the moment. "I've got somethin' in there I want to show ye. What in thunder's makin' such a row?" he suddenly inquired, moving towards the door, the sound coming from somewhere up the street.

Nora was close at his elbow. "I know," she said, a decidedly plaintive note in her voice; "see, there they are—it's the men from Ackland's foundry—or the most of them, at least. This is pay-day, you know—to-day's the second Tuesday of the month—and they're coming here," her voice dropping almost to a whisper. "Look, that's Jim Forest, that one in front, with the red shirt sleeves, carrying his coat over his arm. And his two children are sick at home—some low fever. Dr. Leitch told me about

it himself," and, with one appealing glance at her father, followed by a deep-drawn sigh, she turned and went back into the house.

The struggle in Dinny's mind—or somewhere in that inner region where mind and conscience meet—was brief and violent. Suddenly his resolve was taken; and, gliding along the narrow verandah, he fell to with lightning speed upon the wooden shutters beside the window—the genial and capacious window of the barroom—with the result that a minute or two later saw them up and tightly barricaded, grimly frowning as only the old-fashioned shutters can. Then he shot in through the still half-open door, slammed it shut behind him, and turned the key in the lock.

Waiting, and commanding such a view as the keyhole would permit, Dinny soon had abundant evidence of the dismay his action had occasioned in the bosoms, parched and dry, of Jim Forest and his boon companions. Right earnest were the efforts they made to gain admission by the door, so soon as they had recovered from the shock of the shrouded windows. Knocking, thumping, rattling of the knob, finally gave way to sundry resounding kicks. These unavailing, Jim, in his capacity of leader, began a series of hoarse appeals through the keyhole to such ears as a kind providence might pos-

sibly provide within. The voice that uttered them was eloquent with the pain of great necessity.

Dinny at length responded, dropping on one knee to adjust his lips to the narrow opening. "It isn't anny use, boys," he announced in a stentorian whisper that made Jim start back in the interests of his aural organ; "I niver do business on Sunday—yez better go home."

"It ain't Sunday," roared Jim; "it's Tuesday, Dinny—it's the second Tuesday. Let us in, Dinny—it's pay-day, and we've all got a wad as big as yer head."

"Well, now, that's funny," returned Dinny reflectively from within. "I must 'a' got mixed on the days—Sandy Waldie got a five cent piece changed into coppers here last night, so I thought the next day was the Sabbath. Well, annyhow, it's the sixteenth o' the month—an' that's an annivarsary. It's just thirty year to-day since the potaty crop failed in Ireland—an' I always keep it as a day o' mournin', like; sure my aunt's grandmother starved to death that day—an' I'm obsarvin' it like a dacent man ought to," concluded Dinny, a fine melancholy in his tone.

"Go to blazes," roared Jim, with a violent kick; other voices joined his own and the protest became vigorous and prolonged.

"Go on wid yez," retorted Dinny, "go on down to Jock Taylor's at 'The Queen's Arms'—sure his aunt niver had a grandmother. If ye're dry—he'll soak yez, he'll soak yez good," Dinny repeated, with a smile almost as broad as the door itself. "An' annyhow, boys," he went on confidentially, "there's another reason; it's my birthday—I'm twinty-two to-day—an' it's the birthday av one o' the Riyal Princesses, in Roosia, I think—but she's a rilitive av Queen Victorey—I seen it in the almanac—an' me an' her promised one another, afore I left ould Ireland, that we'd always keep one another's birthday sacred, like. She always spinds the day fastin', an' polishin' up her crown. So I've got to keep faith wid her, boys—yez wouldn't have me break my word wid the quality, would yez, boys? So yez better go on. I want yez all to go an' hear Mr. Hilliard to-night—he's goin' to jaw the natives on 'The Barroom in the Home'—an' I've got him all fixed up like a fightin' cock, an' me an' him's just after goin' over his speech together. So take yer wad home wid yez, boys, an' give it to the wife—good-bye; I've got to go an' write to the Princess—haven't missed for thirty year," with which, and other tender words of farewell, mine host Dinny could be heard striding rapidly along the hall towards the back of the house. Jim and his de-

jected throng reformed in sorrowful procession and resumed their homeward way.

"Nora! oh, Nora, come here," sang out Dinny as he came near the kitchen door, at the same time extracting a key from his pocket. "Come, an' I'll show ye what I've got for ye in the sittin'-room."

Nora was not long in obeying; and a moment later Dinny was standing with the door opened an inch or two, just enough to permit a glimpse into the room where the surprise awaited her.

"Guess, Nora," he said tantalizingly; "guess what yer daddy's got for ye?"

"I can't," said the impatient Nora, pressing the door a little wider open.

"There, then—look ye there," cried Dinny, flinging the door back with becoming abandonment; "see, that's what I bought ye—an' it's yer own—it's all yer own!"

"Oh, father!" the girl almost screamed in delight, rushing forward; "oh, father, this is too much —too good of you—but it's what I've longed for, and dreamed about, for years. A piano, father! something I never thought I'd own—oh, if you're not the dearest thing!" as she turned and threw her arms about his neck, still bearing him on towards the shining treasure in the middle of the room.

"It was what ye said to me *that day*," Dinny began,

with evident embarrassment—"about—you know, about us keepin' a tavern. Ye was down in the mouth then, wasn't ye, girl? But ye've been so good—an' I knew this'd fix everythin' up all right—it'll drive away the clouds an' the blues, my darlint. Ye can come in here, when ye get sad an lonely like, an' play 'Kathleen Mavourneen,' an' 'The Harp That Once,' an' all the purty tunes av ould Ireland. Och, sure, there's nothin' to cheer ye up like a pianny—an' there isn't a better one in the town. I asked Molly Murphy to come in this evenin' an' give us some music—we'll be all alone, after Mr. Hilliard goes to his meetin'. An' don't ye think ye'll be happy now, Nora?" he asked solicitously, trying to lift her head gently from his shoulder.

They were on the piano stool by this time. Dinny, and not the girl, was seated on it, her arms still about his neck, her face hidden. But, to his consternation and amazement, she did not lift her face nor offer any answer to his words. Gently he disentwined her arms, wondering what could be the matter, his wonder turning to dismay as he suddenly felt that the girl was sobbing in his embrace.

"What's the matter?" he asked excitedly; "isn't this what ye've been wantin'?—tell yer father what's the matter."

Then her voice came, thick with sobs. "Oh, father," she began, "what made you speak of *that?* —about the tavern, I mean, and our business here? I was happy till you spoke of *that*—and surely you don't think, father, surely you don't think that this—this, that you've given me—that it can make any difference? I'd sooner not have any, father—nor anything else—I'd sooner be ever so poor," she went on amid a storm of tears, "and be happy—and make others happy. But we're making them miserable, father—lots of them—with this business of, of ours—that's our lifework," and again the tear-stained face hid itself on her father's shoulder, the sobs coming quicker than before.

Poor Dinny stood like one in a dream, his arm about the clinging form. He swallowed once or twice, in a despairing kind of way, still toying with the straying strands of the dark brown tresses, every hair dear to his inmost heart. Aimlessly the fingers of his free hand began idly roving about the keys of the instrument beside him, the notes coming with a hollow and lonely sound.

"It's got an awful purty tone," he said pathetically, strumming on.

No answer came. "An' it's all paid for," he added a moment later, still peering wistfully for the hidden face.

Suddenly Nora looked up. "How many of those men, father, that have just gone away—how many of them do you think have pianos, or anything else that makes life happy?" she asked with trembling lips, the face disappearing again to its hiding place.

Dinny's answer leaped to his tongue. "An' sure," he answered hurriedly, as if certain of solid ground, "didn't I lock the door on them—an' tell them to be gone wid them, an' take their money to the missus at home?" the question coming with pathetic exultation as he paused for a reply.

Nora's arms held him tight, as in a vise. "Yes," she murmured, "oh, yes—and I loved you for it. Both of Jim Forest's children are so sick. And oh, father," springing to her feet in her eagerness, her face all radiant now as she looked with infinite appeal and yearning into her father's eyes, her voice swelling like a trumpet, "let us *keep* it locked, father, —and the shutters up—tight, tight, tight," her hands clasped as she stood before him, as eloquent a figure as ever pleaded cause before its king; "let us *keep* it tight, father, so those poor men will never get in any more—never, never, as long as we live," she repeated, the tone touched with a kind of rapture at the thought.

Dinny gazed at her in wonder, sorrow brooding like a cloud upon his face. "Ye don't know what

ye're sayin', child," he answered dreamily, still staring at his daughter; "there wouldn't be annything left for us but the street—who's that comin'?" he suddenly demanded, evidently relieved at the interruption. "Oh, it's Hilliard—he's goin' to his lecture on 'The Barroom in the Home,'" a pitiful little laugh breaking from his lips; "I'll have to let him out—so ye see we've got to unlock the door already, my darlint," trying hard to smile as he gently released himself from her arms and started out to the hall. "Women's all alike," he mused to himself as he made his way along the darkening corridor to the door; "only Nora's a little more so—that's her mother in her," as he turned the lock and discharged the convalescent orator on his mission of mercy to mankind.

XV

AN ELDER UNORDAINED

BY dint of patient research, and with considerable of kindly guile, Dinny had at last made himself familiar with the details of Arthur Ainslie's financial troubles—and of the swift catastrophe that was about to befall him. And, spurred by the memory of long years of friendship, animated by the altogether noble impulse of his Irish heart, he had, in the fullness of his sacrifice, armed himself for the hour when he should confront the grim creditor and deliver his friend in the sore hour of his need. What this meant to Dinny, few could tell—for his little savings were the hope of his future; and The Buck Tavern, his chief possession, was precious in his eyes. But Dinny had never flinched—and, as a consequence, this bright summer day found him all ready to start forth for Hastie's Mills.

There was great consternation, that selfsame summer day, in the little sitting-room of the only inn that dispensed the public hospitalities of the aforesaid Hastie's Mills. That humble caravansary had been thrown into sudden tumult by the sickness and sudden collapse of its only guest. An aged man he was,

unmistakably a Scotchman, who had driven into the quiet hamlet that very afternoon and silently repaired to the sleepy inn, stabling his own horse without aid from anybody, after which he had entered the little tavern and humbly asked for shelter. Even to the ordinary eye, the sickness that had suddenly overtaken him was pronounced and unmistakable. A deathlike pallor was on his face and his step was tottering and unsteady.

"Cud ye gi'e me a couch to lie doon on?" he began faintly. "This cam' on me aboot an hour ago —no, I'll no' need a bed; I'm gaein' back hame the nicht, to Glen Ridge," as the kind-hearted landlady, noting his evident weakness, offered to show him to a room. "I ha'e a wee bit business to attend to— an' it canna' wait," the shade of anxiety deepening on his face again. "It's wi' a man they ca' McLarty —nae doot ye ken him yirsel'."

The woman nodded. "Yes, I know him," she said; "there are few that don't, around here—most of them sorry for it," and a rather ominous smile accompanied the words; "are you going right up to see him, sir? He lives at the other end of the village—but I'm afraid, sir, you're hardly strong enough to ——"

Before her sentence was finished the truth of her words was attested by a half-reeling motion on the

part of Arthur Ainslie—for the traveller was none other—as he tried to grope his way towards the broad sofa on the other side of the room. He was all but unconscious as the startled woman caught him in her arms; and it was with the greatest difficulty that she guided the fainting man to the couch. Hurrying forth, she returned in a moment with some cordial that was soon forced between the bloodless lips; hurriedly despatching a messenger for the village doctor, she knelt and chafed his hands, peering into his face for signs of returning consciousness.

The friendly draught slowly stirred the enfeebled heart. But the stroke, if such it was, seemed to have clouded his intellect; and dark perplexity stood upon the woman's brow a half hour later as she listened, breathless, to the incoherent murmurings from the stranger's lips.

"Ye'll hae to gi'e me a wee bit mair time," he was muttering, his eyes still closed; "an' I'll try an' raise the money some ither place. Ye winna' turn an auld man oot o' hoose an' hame to die?" he went on pitifully. "Get up there, Bess, go alang wi' ye, my lass—or we'll be ower late—it's near the foreclosin' time," tugging gently at imaginary reins as though trying to hurry his horse; "I didna' ken, sir," the voice rising high, "wha ye are—or I'd no' be here this day," grim sternness written all over the

unconscious face. "But if ye'll gi'e me time—if ye'll bide a wee, sir, I'll dae my best to raise the money, every penny o' 't," the voice dying away to a plaintive whisper.

The doctor was on hand a few minutes later. "It's a complete collapse," he said, after various examinations; "seems like a man who has been carrying some heavy burden; evidences of strain, probably of shock—I'm inclined to think it's some kind of stroke. No, I hardly think he will—afraid of it at least—not at all likely, at his age," this last in response to the solicitous inquiry on the part of the landlady as to the prospect of recovery. "The whole thing might end very suddenly—or it might not. However, the best thing we can do is to get him to bed—it's more than likely he'll rally enough to tell us who he is."

They were just proceeding to carry this advice into effect when suddenly both became aware that the door of the sitting-room had been opened; and turning, they were confronted by the form and face of a stranger. Surprise looked from his eyes, but his gaze scarcely returned their own, fixed as it was on the prostrate man upon the couch. Without word of greeting or apology, as if unconscious of their presence, he came swiftly over, almost elbowing them aside as he knelt beside the stricken man.

He called his name. "Mr. Ainslie," he said, his lips close to the old man's ear, "don't ye know me? It's me, Mr. Ainslie—it's Dinny, Dinny Riley—an' I've come to help ye. Don't ye know me—won't ye speak to me?" the mobile lips quivering as he waited, peering into the withered face.

The semi-delirious man opened his eyes, doubtless aroused by the familiar voice, and fixed them on the newcomer. A light of joyous welcome flashed from them as he recognized his old-time friend, trying pitifully to extend a trembling hand in greeting.

"What brocht ye here?" he inquired faintly; "I thocht ye'd be at hame."

"Oh!" said Dinny, nonplussed just for the moment. "Oh! yes, I came over to—to buy a dog for a man," he answered after a moment's fumbling. And the Recording Angel took up his pen, then laid it down, rejoicing secretly that he had stayed his hand.

"I canna' gang," the old man said after a pause, looking up pitifully into Dinny's face; "I'm ower weak—an' I canna' gang."

"Where is it ye can't go?" Dinny answered—though he knew.

"To yon man's—ye ken wha I mean; to McLarty's. I cam' to plead wi' him, Dinny," the plaintive voice went on; "for we haena' lang. The

mortgage comes due—I'll show ye when—this screed'll tell ye. I had it frae his lawyer, ye ken—an' ye'll see it'll no' be lang till he turns us oot o' hoose an' hame. Oh, I'm wae to think on't," and the old man covered his face with his hands in an agony of grief.

Dinny glanced at the stern legal notice. Yes, the old man was right; the time indeed was short—but this was no news to the loving Irish heart, as has been already indicated. For he had, with secret guile, found out all about this before he had raised the last dollar that could be obtained, both on his personal credit and on the security of his own little property at home; and, ready now to do battle with the stern creditor, he had started on his eager journey to Hastie's Mills.

He handed the note back to the prostrate man. "An' div ye think," Arthur Ainslie began timidly "div ye think ye cud help me, Dinny—ye wadna' gang yirsel', wad ye?" he suddenly gathered courage to say, the wistful eyes turning to look with infinite appeal up to the bended face of the other. "If ye think ye cud gang yirsel'—an' plead wi' him, like—an' mebbe ye cud get him to gi'e us a wee bit mair time? It'll no' be lang, I'm thinkin', that I'll be needin' it—an' mebbe, in the meantime, the guid hand o' th' Almichty micht open up the way. But

I canna' gang mysel'—I canna' gang," the voice coming fainter as the effort overtaxed his strength.

Dinny's face lighted with a sudden gleam of joy. The way, that had seemed shut against him when first he learned of Arthur Ainslie's presence in the inn, now seemed to be broad and clear.

"Yes, I'll go," he said hurriedly, excitedly, already rising. "Yes, I'll go—an' perhaps I won't be able—but I'll do my best, annyway."

"But I dinna' want," the old man began apologetically, "I dinna' want to keep ye frae yir ain business—aboot the dog, ye ken?" lifting his hand in feeble remonstrance.

"Och, that's all right," was Dinny's ready answer; "I bought it afore I came in—it's a yaller dog, an' it hasn't anny tail—an' it's outside now, tied unner the buggy. So I'll go—I'll go right now, an' see this here 'McParty' man; an' I'll have it out wid him, mind ye, or my name isn't Dinny Riley," with which, seizing his hat, he made a swift and eager departure.

Less than an hour later he was descending the steps of a rather imposing residence; a paper—with something written on it—was clutched tightly in his hand, and a look of infinite satisfaction was on the kindly face. Suddenly he stopped, paused a minute or two as if in deep reflection, then turned and went

back to the house he had just left. Once again he rang the bell, answered a moment later by a man of hard and forbidding visage, scowling slightly as he recognized his caller of a few minutes before.

"Say," Dinny began, in his most conciliatory tone, "there's wan thing I want ye to do for me. Ye've got yer money all right, haven't ye, now?"

The man nodded sulkily.

"An' it's a marked check I gave ye, wasn't it—wid the image an' subscription av Cæsar on it? An' I've got yours for the balance—for what's comin' to me, after ye get yer own?"

Again the man nodded moodily.

"Well, I want ye to promise ye won't tell who done it—an' I want ye to *say* ye've promised. An' I'll promise too."

"What for?" the erstwhile creditor asked in a surly tone.

"That isn't anny matter," returned Dinny; "only I want ye to promise me—sure it isn't much I'm axin'."

"They'll find out anyhow," retorted the other; "sooner or later—some one might see the check," and the thin lips and set teeth told the story of a relentless man of business—and of much more beside, by no means unknown to Dinny.

"If it's later, it won't make anny difference—not

to *my* party," Dinny added mournfully. "There won't *be* anny later for him, I'm thinkin'—an' sure it'll be a good turn ye'll be after doin' me, sir, if ye'll only promise."

With a churlish oath the man gave the assurance —then slammed the door and went back into the house.

Dinny made his way as speedily as he could back to the inn. A secret sense of fear, an intuitive misgiving lest he should be too late, lent wings to his feet. And it was well that he hurried as he did. For just as he came up to the door from which he had departed less than an hour before, the doctor, emerging, met him; and one glance at the physician's face prepared him for the words that followed.

"Nearly all over," the doctor said in a voice not entirely professional; "he's been asking for you—and if he has any affairs to settle, you'd better get it done at once. Heart's gone all to pieces," he added jerkily; "it's a clear case of collapse; partly strain, partly excitement—mostly old age. Thought it was angina, at first—but he doesn't seem to be suffering enough for that. Yes, oh, yes, he's conscious all right—better go right on in, though."

Dinny needed no second bidding. Swiftly, yet softly, tiptoeing as he came to the door of the room, he hurried with his tidings. As he entered, one

quick glance told him that this was the chamber of death. Noiselessly he made his way to the bed, knelt beside it, and took the old man's hand in his.

"I seen him," he began breathlessly—"an' I've got awful good news for ye."

The old man turned and looked; the eyes brightened as much as eyes can ever brighten when death's filmy shadow is darkening them. "He's gaein' to gi'e me time?" he asked faintly. "I'll no' need lang—I'll hae anither Hoose."

"What did ye say, Mr. Ainslie?" Dinny asked in reverent wonder.

The old man fixed his dying eyes upon his friend. "We hae a buildin' o' God," he faltered pitifully, "when this earthly hoose is done. An' it'll no' be lang till I hae the better yin."

With sudden impulse, in desperate effort to recall him, Dinny flashed the mighty news. "It's yer own home," he cried with heightening tone, "an' yer own farm! It's paid, Mr. Ainslie—it's all paid—an' I've brought ye a receipt for the money. It's all paid—an' here's the proof av it," as he opened the paper in his hand and held it before the dying eyes.

A flood of joy suffused the old man's face. Palsied by the touch of death, he yet held out his shaking hand for the blessed document; dimly seeing, yet death himself yielded to the stimulus of joy till the

filmy eyes had seen the signature alone. The voice that spoke now, faint though it was, was yet the voice of triumph, the voice of one from whose soul the burden of years had rolled away.

"Wha paid it?" he asked hoarsely, the almost gleaming eyes fixed burningly on the face above him.

"I—I can't say," Dinny answered hesitatingly. "McParty said he promised not to tell. Yes, that's what he said—he said he'd promised not to tell. An' I promised I wouldn't, too," Dinny added, careless of the contradicting claims. "But it was some one who heard tell av yer trouble—some one who loves ye, sir," the words coming with a surge of confidence and power as he leaned over the dying man.

Arthur Ainslie spent at least two or three minutes of the precious few remaining to him in loving wonder, casting about in his mind with the acuteness that death so often lends to those he is claiming for his own.

"It'll be some o' the elders," he said, when the brief pause was over; "'maist naebody else kenned aboot it—forbye yirsel'. It was yin or twa o' the elders, was it no'?—tell me, for I'm gaein' fast."

Dinny nodded. "It's the kind av a thing they'd do," he said, desperately hoping that he was speaking as befitted the presence of great Death.

The eyes of the old Churchman shone with joy. "I kenned it," he whispered faintly, "I kenned it fine—yin or twa o' them felt sair aboot my trouble—an' yince they prayed wi' me." Then the eyes closed gently in silent peace; and the quick deep breathing had its way as the sands of life ran quickly out.

They were bending over him, Dinny nearest to the snow-white head; and the landlady had already whispered that the vital spark was fled, when suddenly the eyes opened once again—and Dinny bent low to catch the parting words.

"Gi'e my love to Margaret and Irwin. An' ye'll tak' the horse back wi' ye?" was added faintly, the Scottish instinct strong in death—"an' it was the elders; an' it shows the fruits o' believin'—it was the grace o' God in their hearts. Wull ye no' be a Christian tae—wull ye no' promise to ——?" The rest was lost in silence; but the parting soul still pleaded through the fixed and glassy eyes—and Dinny bowed his head in reverent assent, staring long into the unanswering orbs.

XVI

A GALLANT KNIGHT, SIR ARTHUR!

PROBABLY it were quite as well that the dead should know nothing as to what befalls those whom they have left behind. Were they permitted to behold the struggles, to hear the sighs, to know the cares, of those whom, loving once, they still do love, how many an eddy of disquietude would interrupt the stream of their heavenly peace.

If there ever was a man fit for heaven, and ready to lay his burden down, that man was Arthur Ainslie. And yet it were impossible to think that the joy of the Yonder-land, through the two short years he had sojourned there, could have remained deep and full to his loving heart if he could have known at how great a price the contentment of his dying moments had been purchased by Dinny Riley. Indeed, could he have overheard Dinny and Nora as they were talking together this Saturday night, he might almost have resented the peace that was his own while those he loved so well were still bearing the brunt of the battle he had left behind.

"Av coorse," Dinny was saying, and the perplex-

ity upon his face told how often the matter in hand had been pondered, "I wouldn't have subscribed so much, if I'd had anny idea what was goin' to happen. Ye see, I knew they needed a new church—an' Dr. Leitch was terrible anxious for it—an' when I put down my name for that hunnerd dollars, how was I to know Arthur Ainslie would be in such a tight place wid his farm? How was I to know I was goin' to tie myself up the way I am, to save Arthur Ainslie from bein' turned out av his house?"

"But you'll be able to meet it, won't you, father?" the girl asked anxiously; she was close to him, one hand resting in his own. They were in the sitting-room, and disengaged—for the bar, as the law had demanded from earliest days, was tight closed on Saturday nights.

The father's brow was knitted anxiously. "I'm hopin' so, girl," he answered after a pause; "it'll pinch me purty bad; but, if my creditors only won't sell me out—an' if I got a few good years after this, I think I'll be on my feet agin all right. The place wouldn't sell for much more than the mortgage, I'm afeared—if they closed on me."

A shade of disappointment came over the lovely face, and her voice trembled a little as she answered. "What do you mean by 'good years,' father?" she said. As she turned and looked at him he might have

noticed the fire of passion in her eyes, partly of pleading, partly of purpose.

"I mean what I say," he answered a little testily; "good years in business, av coorse—in the bar business, makin' money," he went on, not without defiance in his tone; "av honest business, like my father done in 'The Black Bull,' in Kilkarty—keepin' an honest tavern, an' tryin' to get back some o' what I gave away so's a good man could die in peace, an' ——"

"Don't, father, don't," the girl interrupted almost sternly; "you know how it hurts me," lifting one delicate hand in protest.

"An' so his niece, an' her boy Irwin—what's a friend o' yours," with emphasis full of meaning—"so's they could have the deed o' the place, an' live happy an' comfortable on the old farm, in the new house that shouldn't ever have been built. That's what I want to make a little money for, Nora—an' make it honest, too, mind ye."

By this time Nora was on her feet. "You're trying to taunt me," she cried hotly, "and it isn't the first time you've done it—about Irwin Menzies. And I just want to tell you that it's nothing to me where he lives—or how he lives—or whether he lives at all or not. I haven't seen him, not," the crimson flowing all about her cheek—"not for nearly a week

—and I don't care anything about him—and that has nothing to do with it. But it's—it's *the business* itself, father," she cried in an altered voice, the momentary resistance now thrown to the winds as she flung herself into her father's arms, pleading with him in passionate entreaty, "and it wouldn't matter how poor we were, father," she concluded through her tears, "if you'd only do what I want you to—if you'd only give it all up, and let us just go away somewhere, and live together, and be happy all our lives."

He consoled her as best he could, avoiding, however, the matter that had so suddenly aroused her. "An' annyhow," he said pacifically, "it's likely they'll *make* us stop. They'll be after votin' on it now before very long—an' I guess they'll put us out o' business, Nora," smiling down into the tear-stained face; "I guess they'll pass their prohibition, all right —an' sind an honest man to jail for givin' a brother man somethin' to quinch his thirst."

"Never," Nora murmured; "it will never pass—I've watched every move of it; I know more about it than you think—and they'll fail. And anyhow, I don't want you to stop for that—I want you to stop for *me*," and the sweet face wore a smile again as she looked up pleadingly at her father.

"Sometimes I almost wisht it would—just to skin that there Jock Taylor, an' put 'The Queen's

Arms ' out o' business," Dinny mused with whimsical fierceness. "But annyhow," he went on seriously, "I'm goin' to pay that there money to the church—that's wan thing certain. But I've got to go now, my darlint," he suddenly digressed, glancing at the clock in the outer hall. "I promised Andy Orr to come down to-night an' see his pigs—he's got eliven new ones, an' ivery wan a Scotchman—an' I'm goin' down to diskiver their blemishes, like. Ye won't be skeered to stay alone a little while, will ye, girl?"

No, she was not afraid. And yet, after her father was gone, why that strange restlessness, that ebb and flow in the tender cheek, that nervous peering from the window? She was not afraid—and yet she knew that one of the crucial hours of her life was near.

Her mind reverted again and again to the impending tragedy that affected her father's fortunes. It could not be long, she knew, until the sullen creditor, whose very name had come to be a kind of nightmare with them both, would exercise his right and recover the money Dinny had so nobly burdened himself to secure. And the bitter portent of the whole situation, so far as it concerned herself, was this—that she could escape from it all; and, escaping, deliver him as well; and this by a word, if that word she would only speak. That was why, as she arose and looked from the window into the gathering

gloom, her bosom rose and fell with an emotion that would not be controlled, the conflict of her woman's heart showing in her face, the alternating tides of battle evident in the soulful eyes. For she knew *who it was that would come that night*—the same who had so often come before, through those two long years when the clouds had been so steadily closing in upon them.

He had come! And the blinds were tightly drawn; and the first few minutes were almost devoid of speech as Arthur Dustan sat, gazing, his eyes fixed on Nora in that rapt and almost worshipful way that they know in whose hearts a purer love has slowly grown up—a love, as was the case with him, that had gradually supplanted the mere ardent passion of earlier years.

"And I don't plead for your answer, Nora, simply because I love you alone," he went on in a low passionate voice, after much more had passed between them; "but I feel—and I'm not ashamed to say it—I feel I can be of some use to you now. At this crisis, I mean—of course, everybody knows about it. And if you'd only let me, Nora, I'd be—I'd be so glad to help—I'm really attached to your father, anyhow."

The girl shot a quick eager look towards him from the troubled eyes.

"Yes," he resumed eagerly, "I'd be so glad to help—if you'll only say the word, Nora. I tell you," he began vehemently, rising to his feet and coming over to her, "I'll clear off the whole business—I'll discharge every dollar of your father's obligation, and put him right on his feet again; and nobody will be any the wiser—if you'll only let me, Nora," as he timidly put out one hand and touched her. "Say you'll let me, Nora," he whispered.

The girl leaned away, her face aflame. Yet something like wild gratitude looked out from the tender eyes as she turned her face up to his. "It's so good of you, Arthur," she said, trying to control her voice, "and I can't tell you how my heart is touched by it —believe me, I am not indifferent to all your kindness," hurrying with the words as if she would prevent some burning speech from him.

The other seemed to leap at the words, as if he saw some gleam of hope. "And it isn't chiefly for that," he went on, the thrill in his voice attesting the sincerity of his words, "but it's because I love you, Nora—it's because I've loved you, I really believe, ever since I first saw your lovely face. And I'm willing to admit—I do admit—that I haven't been all I should have been. But I'm going to say this," his voice dropping to a low tense tone, "and I do say it—I say it now, and God knows it's true—

that the last two years or more, since I knew that no one could ever fill my life but you, I have honestly tried to be a different man. The hope of being worthy, of being worthy of you, Nora, has made me a better man—I'm trying, and I *will* try more and more, if you'll only help me with your love."

Nora looked up shyly, almost tenderly, her face suffused. Her lips moved as if she wished to say something; but no sound escaped them.

"Yes, that's all I ask," he resumed, coming closer to her. "I know how good you are, Nora—of course, I know, as everybody knows, how much you've had to contend against. With this business—these surroundings," he explained confusedly, unconsciously turning his eyes in the direction of the unechoing bar—his companion winced as if in pain; "and it was only yesterday I heard some one saying how lovely they thought it was that you still kept your class in the Sunday-school—and they say the children worship you. But it isn't for their sakes—or for your father's sake—that's only an issue—or for anybody's sake but my own and yours. It's for yourself, and for the love I have for you, that I want you—and I only speak of *that*, about your father's business troubles, as one of the things I might be able to do to make you happy. And you have the making of me, Nora—my very soul, my

future, my destiny, are all in your hands," pressing this claim with deeper ardour as he thought he detected some response in the girl's face to this loftier plea.

We need not, cannot, follow the course of the secret dialogue which grew in ardour as it went on its way. They were alone together, in that deepest and holiest of all solitude that wraps a wooing heart and a retreating one; retreating, yet halting, almost yielding, turned this way and that by divers claims, by differing impulses, by love, and by lack of love.

No tender heart will think harshly of Nora Riley. Loving her father with passionate devotion; appalled by the doom of distress, and even of disgrace, that loomed before him; ready to lay down her very life for him, so all-consuming was the unselfishness of her heart; seeing in this very door of deliverance the pathway through which she might escape forever from the mode of breadwinning she had come to hate so cordially; beguiled, as so many noble women have been beguiled before her, by the dazzling prospect of wealth and station; persuaded, too, that in her hands was the destiny of the soul that wooed her —and, above all, convinced of the sincerity, even of the purity, of his burning love, there are few but will understand how mighty was the pressure, how all

but invincible the siege that was being laid to the holy fortress of her maiden's heart.

Nora was seeking such refuge, and such wisdom, as could be found by hiding a very crimson face in two hot and fevered hands. And all the while Arthur Dustan pressed his suit with ever waxing ardour.

"Tell me to-night, Nora," he pleaded—"I've waited so long, and so patiently. And if you'll only say the word—if you'll only say the word, Nora, it means our happiness, yours and mine, for all our future lives." He came over as he spoke and gently, with almost reverent touch, tried to take her hands down from before her eyes. "Look at me, Nora," he said, "and tell me—tell me what I'd give my life to hear."

Suddenly the hands went down of her own accord and the big brown eyes were fixed on the man before her; slowly, steadily, relentlessly, they seemed to feel their way out to his and to fasten on them as though searching the very soul behind. Involuntarily, still staring, his hands were withdrawn as he gazed, like one arrested, into the pure depths before him. Long she looked, the placid orbs, rich with the light of purity and truth, seeming to peer into the very secrets of his heart.

"Tell me," she began, the breath at last coming

quick from the rosy parted lips; "is it true what you say?—about how you've tried? and how you're going to try, for me? To be good, I mean—to be true, and noble, and good?" the words coming at last with a little gesture of impatience, as though he should know without being told so definitely.

Arthur Dustan's vows flowed freely, the while he stood and gazed into the eyes that would not be deceived.

"And there's another thing," the sweet voice went on, the colour deepening in her cheeks; "did you mean it, when you said you really *liked* my father—did you mean that?"

"Indeed I did, Nora," replied Arthur; "of course I meant it—why?"

"Well, because I wanted to be sure," was Nora's very feminine reply; "and you would"—the crimson deepened—"you would always be good to him, and kind—and—and respect him?"

"Why, Nora," protested the love-lorn youth, "isn't that the very thing I've been saying? Didn't I just tell you that's one of the things I'd love to do—to be of any, any help, I could—and to set him free from all his difficulties, and everything like that?" coming closer again as his purpose kindled—and his hope.

"I don't mean that," the girl answered firmly; "but I mean, I mean this—you wouldn't *look down*

on him—or despise him—or even remember—even remember all about this—about this business we've made our living in?" she went bravely on, the quivering lips and shaking voice revealing how much it cost her to speak the words.

This was followed by a torrent of protestation and promise on Arthur's part, ending at last, as all such torrents are bound to end, in a renewal of the original appeal.

"Why won't you tell me what I want to hear?" he cried at last, the voice athrob; "why wait and linger this way, Nora?—you know, surely by this time you must know, that I can't live without your love—and won't, either," he added vehemently, rising and coming towards her with arms outstretched.

Again those deep, placid eyes were fixed upon him; and again something in their pure depths restrained and startled him. "Tell me," he suddenly broke out, almost in a tone of fierceness, "tell me this—is there anybody else? Is there some other man, who stands in the way—some one you—you love—more than you do me? I want to know *that* —tell me, Nora, is there another?" and his tone was one of strong entreaty, almost of command.

Love is surely blind, as some one said long ago. If it were not, Arthur Dustan would never have

failed to read his answer in the sudden wave of flame that surged up out of the Infinite and overswept neck and cheek and brow. Nor—unless love is blind and stone blind at that—could he have mistaken the meaning of the maiden's eye, a moment before veiled and wistful, but now aglow with the mystic light that is never seen on sea or land. Alas! he thought that these were all for him, so blind is love when it gazes on the object of its devotion.

He waited for her answer. When it came, it came from blanched and quivering lips—all of which, to his purblind vision, confirmed the sweet conclusion.

"No," she faltered, "no, there's nobody—I don't —I don't—love any one at all," the big eyes now filling with tears as the swimming gaze was turned away from him.

He uttered a sharp exclamation of joy. "That's heaven to me—to hear you say that," he added fervently a moment later. "I was always afraid of some one—I guess you know who; I've tortured myself for long with the idea that you were fond of that young Menzies—you remember the day I went out to their place in the country, when you were there; and I fancied then ——"

She checked him with an imperious stamp of the foot. And the pallor that came over her face like a driving mist filled his very heart with joy; for love

is blind. "Stop," she demanded; "don't ever mention his name to me again. I won't have it—he's nothing to me—and I haven't seen him for, for ever so long," she went on vehemently. "And I know he just despises *me*," the words trembling as they came, "so there—you needn't distress yourself. And I don't want you ever to speak of him to me again—never, never again," a strange and unnecessary fire surging through her speech as her glowing eyes fixed themselves again on him.

Whereat, rejoiced beyond words to tell, all unconscious of what lay behind the sudden outbreak, he took advantage of the gathering dark to press the hunger of his heart with an insistence and a tenderness such as seldom fail with a woman's gentle and yielding soul. The shadows closed in upon them; the deep stillness of the evening was broken by no sound but that of those two voices, the one strong and aggressive and masterful, the other more and more faint and faltering—till by and by the great silence fell, all the deeper for the gentle whispers that flowed now and then from burning lips to feed the Vestal Flame.

XVII

"NOT ACCEPTING DELIVERANCE"

THE lamp was lighted now—and Nora was sitting all alone when Dinny returned that Saturday night. His keen eyes, swiftly surveying the dear face before him, had already detected signs which told him something beyond the ordinary had come to pass in his absence. But no trace of his suspicion escaped him.

"I picked up a piece av news at Andy Orr's to-night," he began, after a few desultory remarks had passed between them; "an' Andy was more int'rested in the news than he was in them eliven pigs," the grin on Dinny's face a little forced and dry. "The news is about yer father, Nora—it's about that there subscription to the church I was tellin' ye about."

Nora's interest was aroused at once. "About the subscription, father?" she echoed; "why, you said you were going to pay it, didn't you?"

"Sure," he answered, "sure, I was goin' to pay it—like anny honest man would do. But that's the news—Andy says they won't *let* me—he says the elders won't take it."

"Won't take it!" cried Nora, amazed. "Why, father?—why on earth wouldn't they take it? I thought they wanted all the money they could get," as she rose and came over beside him.

"So they do," Dinny answered calmly; "but they're gettin' too pious to take mine. Seems it ain't good enough—it's got *blood* on it, Andy says; kind o' siled, it seems—that's the word they use, I think. It's a divil of a fine word, ain't it, now, when you come to think av it? My money's drippin' wid the wail av the orphint an' the screech av the widow—that's what they say, Andy tells me. Got the smell av Scotch whiskey on it, I guess—an' them fellows ought to know—they've sampled it lots o' times, right in there," and Dinny forced a jocular grimace as he shrugged his left shoulder in the direction of the darkened bar.

He could see his daughter's face. And there was plainly visible upon it, as always when this theme was touched upon, the stamp of pain. Alas! her father's grotesque reference to the widow's wail or the orphan's cry had nothing of merriment to her; and the fair features on which Dinny's eyes were glued told the distress his speech had caused her. She knew it had been spoken in bravado—but only her sense of what was due her father checked the word of chiding that sprang so quickly to her lips.

She rose and came over to where he sat, taking her place, as she had been wont to do since childhood, on the arm of his chair, her hand gliding into his. And he might have seen—probably he did—that she *too* had tidings; such tidings as only once can a maiden break to her father, as only once can a father hear. Yes, he knew. And she knew he knew—for a full half minute passed, unspoiled by speech, while the calm eyes of the girl gazed, full of meaning and purpose, into the less calm eyes of the man. Dinny saw in them again the image of her long lost mother, the same quiet strength, the same fixed resolve, the same deep affection. He saw again, too, the light and merriment of the childhood she had left behind; her soul chastened now by sorrow, enriched by the long, lonely struggle of her almost alien life, glorified by the strength and grace of her splendid womanhood.

"I have something to tell *you*, father," she began, and the words came quick and firm at first, as if she were straightened till her message should be delivered. "We soon won't have to make money this way any more—it's nearly all over, father. And we won't have to—to carry on—this, this business any more," gasping a little as she came to the end of the sentence.

Dinny gave a sudden start of surprise, turning to look sharp into his daughter's face.

"What's that ye're sayin'?" he demanded almost sternly; "goin' out o' business, d'ye say? What d'ye mean, girl?—d'ye mean they're goin' to pass that law, that prohibition law, an' shet us up—turn us out on the street?" his keen eyes searching her face for some trace of the answer he expected.

"No," she answered calmly; "no, it isn't that, father. But it's something else," she went on, halting before the plunge; "it's somebody else who's going to make everything all right for us, father—and he'll fix everything, so we won't owe anybody. And then—and then, father—then you'll *come and live with us*—always, father, and you and I won't have to part at all. Only we'll go away from here," and as she spoke her eyes seemed to make the circle of the house, almost shrinkingly, as though the place might be haunted.

Silence fell for a long space upon them. Neither spoke; nor did either look at the other. But Dinny's clasp tightened on the hand he held, and the girl nestled a little closer to the form beside her.

Dinny knew. He knew it all—knew who it was that had claimed the treasure of his heart; and knew how that treasure had been won. With the flashing light of love and sympathy he discerned it all—and his heart sank within him. No thought possessed him in that moment except the one ab-

sorbing thought of the happiness or unhappiness of his motherless child. Fierce was the struggle in his soul; mighty the self-control that sealed his lips.

When those lips at last found speech, it was of far different sort from what Nora had expected.

"I heard another piece av news when I was—when I was inspectin' Andy's little pigs," he remarked gravely; "an' it was good news, mind ye."

Nora answered never a word; this was too much for any maiden's heart.

"It was about politics," Dinny went on calmly in a moment. "Only it won't be of anny interest to the likes o' *ye*," he added sorrowfully; "sure, womenfolks don't care a rap about politics—'specially when they're thinkin' av marryin' an' givin' in marriage. An' annyhow," the words coming out carelessly, "it's consarnin' a man ye don't care annythin' about. Well, it's this—they told me, down at Andy's, that they're likely goin' to put up young Menzies to run for Parlimint! Seems as how they're gettin' tired av always havin' the quality to represent 'em—so they say they're goin' to get a common fellow—just a farmer, like—an' it looks like Irwin was goin' to be their man. He's been makin' some terrible fine speeches lately, it seems, at their political meetin's in the schoolhouses round the country—been wipin' up the floore, like, wid the

fellows they put up agin him; and that's the way it came about they're thinkin' av runnin' Irwin next election."

Then he turned to where she sat beside him. Gently he placed his hands upon her shoulders; and, without a word, he removed her from her place and held her out where he could look full into her face. Not a sound did he utter, nor did he try to throw any special significance into the gaze with which he fastened his eyes upon her. But, still holding her out before him, he looked long and steadfastly, searchingly, masterfully, into the white face that was turned up to meet his own.

Once or twice she tried to speak, but the words seemed unwilling to be uttered. It was Dinny who broke the silence first. "An' about that there other matter, Nora," he began, face and voice alike composed and calm, "there ain't nothin' to it—about annybody helpin' me out, I mean—payin' my debts, an' all that sort o' thing. Sure the man doesn't walk the earth that I'd let do that for me—*not at that price*, annyway," his voice suddenly rising as the passion of his soul leaped to his face, burning in cheek and eye. "No, not at that price, Nora—d'ye hear? No, by the livin' God, there ain't anny livin' man that I'd sell out to on them there terms. D'ye hear, my darlint?" with which, the fiery voice all

broken now, the flashing eyes all wet with blinding tears, he clasped her passionately in his arms and held her tight to his heaving bosom; a bosom whose store of love and tenderness was fed from the fountains of Eternal Love itself.

The girl, gasping, lay passive in his arms. When the storm at length was spent he released her from his clasp sufficiently to look again into her face. The loving eyes were still moist and dim; but the old light of whimsical drollery was to be seen as he gazed with unutterable fondness on his child.

"An' about that there political matter, Nora—about the comin' contest, d'ye mind—d'ye want to know what yer old father thinks about that, Mavourneen?"

Nora gazed at him, bewildered. "No, I don't know, father," she murmured.

"Well, my darlint—I think he'll win—I think that there farmer cuss 'll win out, wid both hands down; them's my sentiments, Nora—he'll beat the Dustan fellow so bad his mother an' the dog won't know him when he comes home; they won't be able to see him for arnicky an' stickin' plaster. You wait an' see, my darlint," with which prediction Dinny arose and took the iron bootjack down from behind the door, now ready for his rest.

XVIII

DINNY THE DIPLOMAT

THE dew was still glistening on the grass, and the fragrance of the sweet Canadian morning was still rising from the meadows, when Dinny rode into the golden harvest-field and drew rein as he watched the men busy at their toil. Chief among them was the stalwart form of the farmer himself, his face showing the satisfaction he felt as he watched the profitable industry. The years had added strength and character to the always noble countenance, and every movement spoke of health and vigour as he turned hither and thither amid the rustling shocks of grain.

"The top av the mornin' to ye!" sang out Dinny—"who might that be ye're wavin' at—at the house, like, forninst ye?"

The bronzed face of Irwin Menzies looked up merrily. "Good-morning, Mr. Riley," he answered—"oh, it's an old-time habit my uncle used to have; he always waved towards the house whenever a load of grain started for the barn. Just a sign of satisfaction, I suppose—and my mother always watches for it. You're out early, Mr. Riley."

Dinny dismounted from his horse, and a few minutes were spent in irrelevant conversation.

"But I mustn't be keepin' ye," he suddenly announced, "wid all the work that's afore ye. But I wanted to speak a bit about this here matter everybody's talkin' about—this here political matter, ye know; sure, I don't need to tell ye annythin' about it," with which he launched at once into the matter on hand.

The conversation lasted long, Irwin reclining against a stook of golden grain while Dinny stood above him, evidently pressing hard the idea that possessed him.

"I don't know that I'd consider it at all," Irwin said at length, "if it weren't for the fact that the nomination is pretty sure to go to that Dustan fellow, if it doesn't come my way. They say I'm the only man could get it ahead of him—and that rather appeals to me. I'm just human enough to remember how often he has snubbed me—and, what's far worse, he has more than once shown his contempt for the one that's dearest to me in this world. You know who, Mr. Riley," the strong face kindling as he glanced far over the fields at the farmhouse in the distance. A woman's form could be seen moving about the door, her white sunbonnet glistening in the morning light. "Considerable of a snob, be-

sides," Irwin went on a trifle warmly; "just because his father happens to have made a little money, he thinks he's the aristocrat of the place—thinks he's got the right of way over all the rest of us."

"Then I'd sock it to him, if I was you," Dinny advised cordially. "I'd learn him who *he* is all right; sure he ain't any better than the rest of us. I mind his father when he used to dig drains for Andy Orr's grandfather—an' he used to feed the pigs, too; an' his wife—Arthur's mother, I mean—I've seen her churnin' an' milkin', when she was a hired girl. More credit to her too—but that young spalpeen, puttin' on airs!—I'd quinch the pride av him, if I was you."

Irwin smiled, shelling a head of wheat reflectively as he looked down on the ground. "Not the very highest motive for entering political life, I'm afraid," he remarked with a smile, after a long pause; "the fact of the matter is, I hardly know just what to do. I've been wishing mightily that I had some good sound advice in the matter—from some one that isn't interested particularly, some one who would give me a straight opinion, without any personal feeling at all," and Irwin looked perplexedly along the glistening avenue before him.

Dinny's face was slightly flushed. But he had his voice under perfect control as he answered, though it must be admitted his eyes were turned away.

"I'll tell ye who ye ought to see," he said significantly; "there's some one I know would like to talk this over wid ye—an' she's got a level head, even if she is a rilative av my own. It's my girl, Nora—won't ye go an' talk it wid Nora, Irwin? Sure she'll give ye the advice ye're wantin', me boy."

The flame leaped to Irwin's face, mounting up till it suffused the broad brow above. "What makes you say that?" he demanded—"is it because you mean *she* isn't interested—because, because you mean she cares nothing for me?" the dark stern eyes fixed rigidly on the immobile face before him.

"Sure I don't mean annythin'," Dinny answered demurely; "an' ye'll have to find out that other for yerself. When it comes to the heart av a woman, I'm like that there case in the Bible—I haven't annythin' to draw wid, an' the well is deep. Nora's is, annyhow. But I'm afeared, Irwin," his voice dropping to the confidential, "I'm a little afeared that there Dustan fellow is tryin' to get her on his side; I'm afeared he's been canvassin' her—he was at the house Saturday night, when I was down lookin' at Andy Orr's little pigs. So I thought ye'd mebbe better be axin' her for her vote an' influence, like?" and Dinny looked up at Irwin with as innocent a pair of eyes as ever concealed the depths of an Irish heart.

That day passed on leaden feet, so far as Irwin Menzies was concerned. And the early evening found him within the precincts of The Buck Tavern, shown in thither by the proprietor himself, who was now departed to find his daughter and inform her that a visitor was waiting in the little parlour.

Quite vainly did Nora try to conceal her astonishment when she entered the room and beheld the unexpected guest. A few minutes, however, sufficed to assure her that he knew nothing of what had transpired in that same room a couple of nights before. And great was her surprise when Irwin, after much preliminary embarrassment, led up to the matter of his political prospects, and sought her counsel about the same.

"I wanted to come," he said at length; "I wanted your advice—and, besides, your father advised me to come."

Nora started in her seat. "My father!" she echoed, biting her lip to control the outbreak that threatened to ensue. "Did he tell you? I mean, did he say anything—that is, did he tell you all about everything? About Saturday night?"

Irwin stared, aghast. Slowly, slowly and cruelly, the grim and dread suspicion took birth within him. He rose and came over to where she sat, looking down at her in the imperfect light. And then, as

only lovers are gifted to discern, he read what most he feared; in the downcast eyes and burning cheeks and quivering lips, he read it all. His hands, outgoing, touched her reverently; she turned a little, trembling—and he could see her face. The eyes were closed—but she knew—and slowly his face descended towards hers, the hot breath ruffling a little the wavy strands of hair that floated about neck and brow.

"Don't, Irwin," she murmured pitifully—"if you love me."

He waited, pausing a moment. "Why?" he said hoarsely.

"Because I'm promised," and the answer was so faint he could scarcely hear.

"You're mine, Nora," he said, his voice low and tense—almost triumphant. And the words, as he uttered them once again, came with no shock of surprise to her as she rested with upturned face. "You're mine, Nora—even if you won't admit it—even if you do not know it," he said, his voice sounding far away, so low that she could barely hear; "you've been mine, ever since I first saw your face that winter morning in the sleigh. And I'll never give you up—never, never—whatever promises you've made, or whoever claims you as his own. Good-bye," as his face was slowly raised from hers, while his eyes still gripped her own with the same masterful passion as before.

Without a word he moved towards the door, turning to look long upon the ashen face before him. Closed a moment, the door was suddenly opened again, as Irwin's set face reappeared.

"I've got the advice I wanted," he said significantly; "my mind's made up now—I'm going to enter that contest."

She merely looked up, mystified. "That contest we spoke about," he added, each word coming out tersely by itself as his lips closed tight. "I'm going to go into it now—and I'm going to win."

XIX

"THE INJUDEECIOUS USE"

THE possessions of Dinny Riley were certainly the cause of much concern. Two ardent hearts, as has been already told, were struggling for his daughter. And a whole body of elders, as shall now be told, were disturbed about the disposition of his ducats; or such poor share of them, at least, as Dinny's generous hand had offered them, wrung as that offering was from his own plaintive poverty and in spite of impending loss.

Wherefore it came about that the kirk session of St. Andrew's was convened on a certain night, some considerable time after that momentous evening on which Irwin had avowed his love. A glance at the care-worn face of Dr. Leitch, more and more beautiful as that face became with the deepening years, might have shown that the business before the court was of a kind not especially palatable to the Moderator. Besides, every last elder of the church was present—and this in itself was an unfailing sign that the matter in hand was of more than passing interest. Nor was it long before the clerk of session,

with a mien more than ordinarily solemn and responsible, presented that matter to his brethren.

"As ye ken, Moderator," he began in measured tones, "the business afore us is to deal wi' this communication," dwelling with a little pride on the word as he held a large sheet of closely written foolscap up before him. "I'll read it to ye—an' the court can dae wi' 't as it considers best."

With which the clerk proceeded to read the document. "An' that's the subjec' o' discussion, Moderator," he announced ominously as he finished; "wull ye tak' the money o' Dinny Riley—or wull ye grant the plea o' the petitioner" (these words were music to the ecclesiastical ear of the venerable clerk) "an' send it back till him, wi' the intimation—wi' the intimation," he repeated, now in his very element, "that we dinna' want it?"

"The matter is before you, my brethren," Dr. Leitch said quietly, evident distress upon his face. "What disposition shall be made of the money that Mr. Riley has paid in towards the new church? If you decide it is *not* to be accepted, the trustees will have to be notified to that effect; if it *is* to be accepted, no action need be taken, of course. The whole question is now in your hands for your decision."

There was a long pause. Then arose one of the most orthodox of the elders, the same whose protest

had just been read, and he promptly moved that the treasurer be instructed to return to Mr. Dennis Riley the sum of money received from him, and to explain to Mr. Riley why his contribution could not be accepted.

"We a' ken, Moderator," the good man urged when speaking to his motion, "or we a' should ken, at ony rate," he revised, "that it's no' becomin' to tak' money for the work o' the Lord, that's been earned the way Dinny—the way Mr. Riley—comes by his. We a' ken he mak's his money sellin' whiskey, an' ——"

"Excuse me, Moderator," broke in one of the brethren in the rear, famous as the authority on church law among them; "I rise till a pint o' order —I submit that yon is no' a fittin' word to be used in a solemn court o' the kirk like this. If Mr. Paisley *must* refer to the—the commodity—that Mr. Riley deals in, let him ca' it by a name that'll no' lower the dignity o' this court. It's 'speerituous liquors,' I submit, Mr. Moderator, that Mr. Riley sells—an' no' what Mr. Paisley ca'd it. Sic a like word," he went on contemptuously, "to utter at a meetin' o' the session—an' it duly opened wi' prayer into the bargain!" as the ecclesiastic took his seat with a reproachful glance at the plain-spoken brother.

But Mr. Paisley, after the fashion of his kind, was in no way disposed to yield without a struggle. Such struggles, piously carried on, have been the perquisites of kirk sessions since the days of John Knox himself.

"Yon is triflin' wi' terms," he replied defiantly, after a prolonged use of a very crimson handkerchief had given him time to gather his forces. "I dinna' believe in mincin' words. An' I canna' help wonderin' if Mr. Laidlaw," indicating his challenger by a nod in his direction, "if Mr. Laidlaw is aye as pertikkler as he is the day—in the use o' terms, that is. Sae I'll ask him—through you, Moderator—I'll be askin' Mr. Laidlaw, when he tak's a wee drappie at the taivern himsel', does he ca' for whiskey—like I ca'd it, Moderator—or does he say he'd like a leetle 'speerituous liquors'? That'll gie us licht on the pint, Moderator," he added, nodding his head amiably towards Dr. Leitch.

But Mr. Laidlaw's reply was already on his lips. With fatal haste it came. "I dinna' *need* to say what," he retorted triumphantly; "they a' ken what I aye tak'—when I'm no' feelin' extry well," he added by way of repair. "An', onyway," he hurried to point out, the peril of his defense beginning to dawn on him, "they're twa very different matters—what a buddy says i' the taivern, an' what

he says at a meetin' o' the session. An', even if an elder doesna' ca' it 'speerituous liquors' then, it isna' written doon in the minutes an' signed by the Moderator," he exclaimed triumphantly, his head going out with a little jerk towards the vanquished brother.

There are always champions for the strong. Wherefore, to add to the overthrow of the aforesaid vanquished one, there arose a veteran member of the court, Andrew Kersell by name. His eye was flashing with the eagerness that possessed him, for he felt sure that his remarks would settle the point in question.

"Mr. Laidlaw was richt," he began positively, "an' I can prove it," extending a long index finger as the first step in the process. "It doesna' require mair nor common intelligence, Moderator, to ken that ony man wha says Dinny—wha says Mr. Riley —mak's his livin' sellin' whiskey, to ken he's a'thegither wrang. For he doesna'. That's only a pairt o' what he sells," he declared exultantly; "an important pairt, nae doot, but no' by ony means the whole o' 't. He *does* sell whiskey, nae doot—but that doesna' cover it. We a' ken, Moderator," the light of victory on his face as he went on, "that that doesna' constitute a complete statement o' the case. There's muckle mair—does he no' sell beer, an' cider, an'

lager, an' wine, an' porter, an' gin, an' stout," he went fluently on, "an' ale, an' brandy, an' John Collinses, an' ——"

"Ye're repeatin', Andra'," came from a quiet but most genial looking man in the corner.

"An' ye left oot high wines," complained one with a decidedly Scottish face; he reached out and touched Mr. Kersell's sleeve as he spoke, the omission being serious.

"I dinna' like them," retorted he who had the floor—"they're no' fit for a man to drink. An', as I was sayin', Moderator, Mr. Laidlaw was perfectly richt. We're indebted till him for a term—a *generic* term, Moderator," the word coming with a triumphant jerk, as when some protesting fish is landed on the grass, "a term that covers a' thae—thae beverages, that I've mentioned. There's mair forbye, Moderator, as nae doot ye ken yirsel'," turning confidentially towards Dr. Leitch—"but that's a' that occurs till me just at the moment. Noo I think we can gang on wi' the debate," as he sat down with the air of a man who has at last cleared the deck for action.

The original speaker resumed the argument so vigorously interrupted, and again pressed the contention that St. Andrew's new church building, when at last it should stand complete, must have no

malodour of contributions from such a doubtful source. Two or three supported him, and for a time it looked as if the vote would be unanimous to repudiate Dinny's hundred dollars.

But gradually the Scottish instinct began to make itself felt.

"We hae to be carefu', nae doot," ventured one canny Scot, "as to what kind o' money we tak' for the work o' the Kingdom; but it seems fair fearsome to gie up a hunnerd dollars—when we hae it richt in oor haun', ye ken. That's the pint, Moderator; it's no' as if Mr. Riley had *promised* us the siller—that wad be quite anither matter. But he's *paid* it, ye ken—we hae it oorsel's. An' to send back the money, the cash, Moderator—it's like temptin' Providence, to dae a thing like that."

The Moderator was about to make some remark; but before he had framed the words, another worthy yeoman was on his feet. "There's guid sense in what has juist been said," he allowed cautiously; "it seems a sair dispensation o' an inscrutable Providence," dwelling piously on the words, "to hae to gie up a hunnerd dollars—no' a subscription, as was pinted out, but the money itsel'; it seems dark an' mysteerious to hae to dae a thing like that. But it's oor duty to gie up for conscience' sake, ye ken—like the martyrs did afore us. An' there's anither way o'

lookin' at it, forbye, an' it's this; if we dinna' send it back, there's a wheen o' them in the congregation —the prohibeetion folk, ye ken—that winna' gie us onything at a'. An' then we'd lose mair nor we'd gain," he affirmed, looking around cautiously on the thoroughly interested brethren. "Sae I think we'd better gie up that money—for conscience' sake—we're tellt we should tak' joyfully the spoilin' o' oor goods," with which pious conclusion the far-seeing saint sank into his seat with a sigh, such as commonly marked the closing words of these solemn disputants.

"Moderator," and the tone commanded attention —for there was a note of purpose in it; "I've listened to a' that's been said—an' I agree wi' the previous speakers that it seems a grievous hardship to gie back ony money that's been put intil oor haun's. It's ower hard to get, Moderator, as ye ken. But I dinna' think, for a' that, it ocht to be devoted to the buildin' o' a hoose for the worship o' Almichty God. An' I've been thinkin' o' a way, Moderator, that'll gie us a conscience void o' offense afore God an' man—an' let us keep Mr. Riley's money intil the bargain. It wadna' dae to build a kirk wi' 't—that's a *speeritual* purpose. But I'm thinkin', Moderator, I'm thinkin' it wadna' be a bad idea juist to keep the money, an' use it for some ither

thing. There'll be sheds to build for the beasts—an' there'll be the grounds aboot the kirk to level an' fix up—an' there'll be a wood-shed to be built. Noo, Moderator, none o' thae things is *speeritual* in their natur'; an' we can juist haun' Mr. Riley's hunnerd dollars ower to the trustees—they're no' a speeritual body, ye ken—then we'll bring nae disgrace on the congregation, an' we'll hae the money intil the bargain."

This made a sensation. Every elder lapsed into the silence of reflection for a moment, gradually breaking it to convey his opinion—and, in most cases, his admiration—to his neighbour.

"I hae a better idea, I'm thinkin', Moderator," suddenly announced an elder of iron-clad appearance, known as Watty Barker. "Why canna' we gie the money to Foreign Missions?—Dinny wadna' mind, an' thae heathen buddies'll never ken the difference. They wad never ken he made it sellin' 'speerituous liquors,' to quote the words o' Mr. Laidlaw—they never heard tell o' The Buck Taivern, but there's naebody in these pairts but wha kens aboot it. An' then, Moderator, we wadna' hae to answer till the sin o' wastery in the Judgment Day," casting a final look of appeal upon his assembled colleagues as he resumed his seat. "An' I hae anither idea, Moderator," he resumed, leaping to his feet again

before the floor was taken; "we a' ken Mr. Riley's in sair financial trouble—an' they say the mortgage is gaein' to be closed on him, an' he'll be sold oot o' a' he has. Weel, Moderator, if there's onything ower an' above the mortgage, could he no' gie us the hunnerd oot o' *that?*—an' then there'd be nae scandal i' the kirk—that wadna' be frae the sale o' speerituous liquors, or liquors o' ony ither kind," resuming his seat once more with the air of a man who had propounded two solutions of the problem, either one of which should be eminently satisfactory.

Then flowed the stream of talk afresh, each and every suggestion receiving copious and profound discussion. At length the matter came to vote; and, by a fairly substantial majority, it was resolved to decline Dinny's proffered gift.

But before the court had adjourned, and while the desultory firing that marks the close of all such contests was still in progress, a voice from the back of the room, near the window, suddenly announced in a startled whisper: "There's Dinny Riley going down the road—see, there he is, right under that lamp across the street!"

"Call him in—why shouldn't we call him in and talk to him ourselves?" one of the younger men exclaimed impulsively.

The session clerk, burning with the spirit of his of-

fice, confirmed the suggestion cordially. "I'll convey till him the decision o' the court," he volunteered, a great cheerfulness behind the great solemnity.

So thus it came about that a minute or two later found Dinny, still gaping with surprise at the unexpected summons, standing before Dr. Leitch and the assembled elders. The Moderator bade him be seated, but Dinny declined with a courtesy and with muttered thanks. So he stood among them, his old felt hat in his hand, turning it round and round by the rim, as he surveyed the faces before him. But ever and again his gaze returned and rested on the tender and placid features of the aged minister, whose glance, so keen and stern a minute before, seemed now to rest in fullness of compassion and yearning on the embarrassed stranger.

While the clerk, with more difficulty than he had anticipated, communicated to their visitor the mind of the elders regarding his subscription, Dinny stood with head bent low; and it was a minute or two before he spoke.

"Did annybody here say I didn't keep a dacent tavern?" he asked at length, in a low and almost trembling voice, his head but slightly raised.

One of the elders, perhaps two of them, disavowed the suggestion. The others concurred.

"Or does anny av yez think ye didn't get yer

money's worth?" he pursued gently. And with the same result.

"Or that I iver put anny watter in what yez took to dhrink?" looking frankly up this time, and surveying the rather startled faces of the elders. Deep silence gave him answer.

"That's what hurted me the most—when I first heard tell from Andy Orr that yez were goin' to go back on me," Dinny went on plaintively. "I cud a' stood it, if it had been anny other crowd o' men—if it had been the Methody's, or the Baptists—or even the Council, very few av them comes near-hand me. But to think it's men that's frinds an' customers av me own—the most av them, annyway; men that knows I kep' an honest tavern, because they was reg'lar in their attendance at it, an' seen all that was goin' on—that's what hurts me, Doctor," turning with an appealing look to the Moderator. "I wouldn't have cared so much if they'd been strangers—but for frinds an' customers that was familiar, familiar wid The Buck Tavern—most av them always stayed till closin' time—to think it was them that done it. That's what kind o' hurts me, Doctor," and Dinny slowly revolved his old hat in his hands, looking down at it with the air of a disappointed man.

The session clerk took advantage of the pause to rise, not without precipitancy, to his feet. "I move

that we adjourn," he said brusquely; "the business o' the court is at an end." Several murmured approval, followed by a general ducking of heads as the elders reached for the head-gear at their feet.

But by this time Dinny's Irish blood was rising. Yet perfect self-control marked his words as he turned and looked the session full in the face. "Wait a minute, won't ye?" he requested; "I've seen most av yez when yez weren't in anny hurry to adjourn—an' when it was plenty later 'n this. I want to appeal to ye wanst more. Can't yez keep *part* av that hunnerd dollars I gave ye?" leaning out to them rather imploringly as he spoke. "Can't ye keep the part av it that yez gave yerselves? Surely there couldn't be anny harm in *that*. Now, near as I can reckon it, that'd be about forty dollars out av ivery hunnerd I made at The Buck Tavern. I wouldn't ask yez to take what I got from th' ungodly customers—like Judd, an' Tim Loftus—sure ye all know Tim an' Judd, an' manny's the little evenin' we've all had together. But I'd like yez to keep what the elders gave," he went on earnestly; "now, near as I can reckon it—from memory, like—I make it there's tin dollars av that hunnerd came from Mr. Muir; an' tin more from Mr. Laidlaw; an' mebbe about five from Mr. Kersell; an' about three an' a half from Mr. Cochrane—he wasn't niver very free,

an' most always waited till some one axed him what he'd have; an' then there'd be tin from Mr. Telfer—that makes thirty-eight an' a half, Doctor, up to date," after a slight pause for purposes of addition; "an' then—let me see," his brows knitted as the fatal appraisement went silently on within.

But already Dinny's words had struck home. Mr. Laidlaw was now upon his feet. "Moderator," he began, "I move the reconsideration o' the matter afore the court—I'm sure we a' feel we didna' hae a full discussion o' all the pints concerned. Forbye, we've mebbe got new licht."

This was seconded with such eagerness that it was easy to infer the altered attitude of the elders. And, despite a faint protest from the clerk, Mr. Laidlaw's motion was carried almost unanimously, a sigh of relief rising from the breasts of not a few. When the excitement had subsided Dinny was not to be seen; slowly backing out, still revolving his hat, and with a parting nod to the Moderator, he had made good his escape.

It was not long before evidence was forthcoming that Dinny's words had hit the consciences of his auditors. "Moderator," one of the oldest elders, silent hitherto, rose immediately after to remark, "I'm thinkin' we'd dae weel to examine oorsel's. We a' ken aboot the vote that's soon to be ta'en, in

a few months—aboot New Year time—in Glen Ridge; aboot shuttin' up the taiverns, aboot prohibeetion, ye ken. An' I'm thinkin'—after what we've heard the nicht—I'm thinkin' we ocht to pledge oorsel's nae to gang till ony public hoose till the matter's settled. It'll gie us mair influence as a session, I'm thinkin'."

A low murmur of dissent slew the cruel thought.

"Weel," resumed the undaunted one, "then I'll move that the Session recommends the elders to refrain frae the use o' speerituous liquors—in the meantime, onyway."

There was a sad calm. The brethren knew not which horn of the dilemma was least to be desired. It was Andrew Kersell who saved alike the peace and the liberty of the elders.

"Moderator," he said gravely, amid a profound calm, "I move in amendment that the elders be recommended to refrain frae the *injudeecious* use o' them—an' as long as we live, Moderator. If we're gaein' to be temperance, let us be temperance oot an' oot," his face aglow with zeal.

The hum of applause that followed was low and deep. "Aye, aye," could be heard here and there over the room. "Aye, 'the *injudeecious* use o' them;' that covers a' the ground—an' there's nae bigotry aboot it. Aye, that's fine, 'the *injudeecious* use'!"

XX

DINNY THE DEBATER

THE fight was on. And all Glen Ridge was divided into "Prohibition" and "Anti-Prohibition." Whether the public bar should be abolished or retained—that was the fiery question of the hour.

Dr. Leitch, whose trumpet had never yet given an uncertain sound when he would summon men to the battle, had been foremost in the fight. Yet, beloved though he was, he had not gone unscathed. The tongue of slander had not been still.

It was late, very late on this particular night, when the representatives of the liquor interests were convened, for purposes of offense and defense, within the close-barred doors of The Queen's Arms, the proprietor thereof, Jock Taylor of previous mention, having summoned them to such conclave as befits those whose craft is in danger. There were not many of them; the three or four actually engaged in the business in Glen Ridge; two or three from the immediate neighbourhood—and one eloquent advocate who had come from afar, the gift of some

Central Committee whose business it was to defend the far-flung interests of "the Trade."

There was some little delay before the business of the evening actually began, occasioned by the tardiness of one particular man, who, beyond all others, was considered the most popular and influential exponent of the cause they were met to champion. That man, it is hardly necessary to add, was Dinny Riley, long time owner and proprietor of The Buck Tavern, the most popular institution of its kind in all that region.

"What we need," began the imported eloquent one after all were seated, "is something that will stir the public conscience—something that will appeal to the highest feelings of the electorate. It's no good to simply say we want to continue in the business—and that we're out for number one. That always brings a gush of cant and humbug from the preachers and others, about men spending money over the bar that their children need for shoes and food, and all that sort of rot. And, of course, when they get off on that kind of twaddle there's no arguing with them—that's beyond all reason."

"Well, get at the point," interrupted one of the party.

The imported one looked oracularly at his hearers. "We've got to take higher ground," he said impress-

ively; "we've got to lift the debate to a loftier level, don't you see? Personally, I always find the *Liberty* line pays best. Ring the changes on how a law of this kind, if it's carried, interferes with the freedom of the subject; 'British Liberty,' that's the line, gentlemen—that's what fetches them—show how intolerable it is, in a free country, for any one to say what a man shall or shall not put into his own stomach. 'Britons never, never, shall be slaves'—that's the idea, you know. That's the battle-cry that tells in a contest of this kind. There's lots of other good ones," he went on confidentially; "'a little wine for your stomach's sake,' and the water that was turned into wine—they're both good battle-cries; but this here Liberty one beats them all."

He paused, noting with satisfaction the admiration on the faces before him. On all but one, that is—for something in Dinny's expression was far from reassuring. Indeed, so pronounced were the orator's misgivings that he leaned over to ascertain just what it meant. "Perhaps our friend here—Mr. Riley, I believe—who has been a long time in the business, will tell us how the idea strikes him?"

Dinny sat up very straight. "Like a rotten egg," he said without moving a muscle.

"Hi!" cried the orator, unable to conceal his

emotion; "what's that you say, Mr. Riley?" leaning forward further than before.

"Like a two-year-old egg," Dinny revised, imperturbable as a statue; "it makes ye hold yer nose," sniffing violently the while; "it's old, that there idea av yours—an' it's rotten—an' it's a lie," he concluded, shutting his lips together like a trap.

Then was the commotion loud and high. By the time it had partly subsided Dinny was in fine fettle. His voice rang out above the din. "I'm agin this prohibition law," he began tersely, "an' I'm goin' to fight it to a finish—but I ain't goin' to be a damn hypocrite. I ain't goin' to make a livin' show av myself afore men an' angels, pertendin' to be lyin' awake nights for fear some one won't get their liberty, when iverybody knows it's Dinny Riley I'm lookin' out fer. That there liberty rot," he snorted contemptuously, "the very smell av it's enough—if we're goin' to fight, I say, let's fight honest," casting a very defiant glance towards his audience as he concluded.

"Dinny's right," suddenly sang out one of the company, the richest of them all, as a matter of fact, a repulsive looking creature who had enriched himself by a refinement of cruelty and with the aid of methods that a decent devil-fish would have scorned. "There ain't goin' to be no preachin' in this cam-

paign—not if I can help it. An', besides, I know a far better way. That's what brought me here to-night. It's a winner, mind ye," lowering his voice as he proceeded to develop his plan, "an' I'll tell ye what it is. This here's around Christmas time," he went on, eager to discharge his message, "an' what I say is this; we've got to make a pool, an' every man's got to chip in—I'll give a hundred myself—and we'll raise a pile that'll knock them temperance cranks into next week. This money, mind you," leaning out impressively as he spoke, "this money's to go for *charity;* every last cent of it; to be distributed among the poor, to get 'em Christmas baskets, an' buy coal, an' get 'em good warm clothing, an' everything like that. That's what'll beat them temperance cranks; that's what'll knock their eye out—we'll beat 'em to a finish. An' I've got the cash right here for my share—an' we'll start the subscription right now," he concluded, looking this way and that as if in search of pen and ink.

A buzz of mild approval broke from his fellow craftsmen. One of them had already produced a sheet of paper, unfolding it flat upon the table, when like a bolt from the blue an Irish voice rang out with a note of thunder:

"Ye snivellin' hypocrites!" Dinny now upon his feet, his eye burning like a coal of fire. "Did ye fetch

honest men here to-night to plaster them wid insults? This here talk's enough to make the divil laugh," he declared with infinite contempt; "why don't we own up we're out after the stuff, like we all know we are. Mebbe we'll lose our license—I don't believe it—but annyway, we'll keep our dacency. D'ye want to make ivery honest tavern-keeper the laughin' stock o' the countryside?" he demanded hotly. "Sure we all know there's not a man in forty counties that's done as much to *make* people poor —an' to take the bread out av the mouths av little shavers—an' to take the shirt aff men's backs—an' to quinch ivery fire in ivery house he could: there ain't a man in Canady as handy at it as that there spalpeen that's axin' us to turn round an' make hypocrites av ourselves—what the divil d'ye think we are, annyhow?" he demanded, moving in his wrath over to the ingenious author of the suggestion that had so aroused his ire.

But suddenly a new actor leaped upon the stage. It was Jock Taylor himself.

"Ye're all talkin' like fools," he broke out hotly, and the huge animal face of the man glowered with malignant cunning; "all your rot about liberty—an' this baby-mush about givin' to the poor. Listen to me—I'll talk some sense. What we've got to do, to kill this fool movement to

put us out o' business, is to kill the men that's leadin' it. We've got to put *them* out o' business —an' we can. Everybody knows there's just one man that can beat us," his eyes gleaming savagely; "an' he's a damn preacher—we all know that—a Presbyterian preacher. I ain't askeered to spit out his name, either—it's Dr. Leitch. An' I can settle *him* all right," Jock went on, his breath coming short; "I've got *him* where I want him. He's our meat, I tell you—listen here; I've got proof he sent one night to a tavern—it was The Buck—an' the man he sent bought a bottle o' brandy, an' took it away with him—an' he took it to where the preacher was. I've got the proof for it. An'—you know the rest—we don't need to say any more, that'll do the trick—it's doin' it now. I'll bet the drinks for the crowd that there ain't a man here that hasn't heard it. I seen to that," a leer of hate and cunning on his face, as he looked around the circle.

He was not disappointed in his expectation. They had all heard of it.

Nearly all eyes were now turned on Dinny. He was still upon his feet. "Yes," he began, and his tone was so low that those about him had all they could do to hear; "yes, Dr. Leitch *did* send to my tavern—an' he *did* get a little flask; an' it was brandy —an' the boy that got it," after a long pause, "*did*

take it to Dr. Leitch. An' that there boy's father —his name was Boucher—he was dyin'," he added slowly, sadly, looking down; "consumption, it was —an' his doctor ordered him a little stimylant—an' they didn't have anny money. Did ye know *that?*" the voice rising a little as he turned towards Taylor.

Jock murmured something about rumours he had heard—he didn't know if they were true.

"That's all right," Dinny interrupted, speaking with difficulty; "an' Dr. Leitch paid for that there stimylant—like he done for annything they had to eat —an' he stayed wid them till the breath was out av Boucher's body—an' he prayed wid them an' comforted them, like; an' he paid ivery penny av the funeral expenses—an' it's yerself that's a damn liar, Taylor, ye varmint, ye," as he sprang at the man beside him, clutching him by the throat and felling him with one blow to the floor. "Ye'll do the trick, will ye?—I'll larn ye a trick or two, blackenin' a man that ye ain't fit to tie his boots. An' ye've got the proof, have ye?—I'll prove ye, ye ——"

But by this time the howls of Taylor had summoned to his aid several of his brethren. Dinny fought savagely for permission to finish the work he had so earnestly begun; but, overborne, he was at last compelled to desist. A feeble effort was then made to restore order from the chaos. One or two

suggested reconciliation—whereat Dinny laughed. There was some desultory conversation, a little frantic enthusiasm, a faltering appeal from the orator, and then they adjourned *sine die*.

The lamp burned late that night in Dinny's room at The Buck Tavern. Poor Dinny, he was but a sorry hand with the pen; and composition was agony.

The fruit of his toil was apparent the next morning. Beside the post-office door, on a pole adjoining the livery stable, in front of The Buck Tavern, on the counters of a few stores whose proprietors Jock had robbed, outside two blacksmith shops—and on twenty or thirty available posts and places—securely tacked at each corner, was the following statement and appeal that Dinny had composed, written, and copied through that long night of toil:

In regards to the illection your vote an influens s rispectfully requested to vote agin closin the Buck Tavern up.

Which your patternage is requested to be continued on

DINNY RILEY
Propryetor

P. S.—In regards to that their yarn Jock Taylor started agin Dr. Leitch Jock Taylor is a liar

D. R.

XXI

WHEN A WOMAN PLEADS

IT was close, very close, to the day of the election. Bright and beautiful, one of the earliest days of the opening year, the very weather seemed to know that important business was drawing near. Dinny was early astir, although it had been late the previous night before he had sought his rest. For, as the contest deepened, Dinny had thrown himself with ever-increasing eagerness into the fray; and the liquor party had more and more come to reckon him as the strongest force in their favour.

"Nearly ready for breakfast, father?" came Nora's voice from the little dining-room; "everything's on the table."

Splash! splash! floating in, told that Dinny's ablutions were not yet concluded. A minute or two later he appeared at the door. "I got some terrible good news last night," he informed his daughter, still towelling vigorously; "if we can only lambaste them timperance bloods at the election, I won't have anny more trouble wid that mortgage on the tavern," looking quite tenderly about his home as he spoke.

"Nothin' to speak of, annyway," as he flung the towel to a couch on the other side of the room.

Nora looked up, her inquiry on her face.

"It's the truth I'm tellin' ye," Dinny went on; "they're goin' to give me time. Sure my creditors say they'll give me time. An' if I get a few years o' business—if they're good years—if I can't make enough in a few years to pay off that pesky mortgage, then I'm not the Dinny Riley I used to be—that's all I've got to say. Av coorse," he went on seriously, "it all depinds on whether we win out agin the cranks that's tryin' to put us out o' business—but I think we'll mash their potaties for them all right, when it comes to the bit," as he straightway fell to upon the porridge Nora had dished out to him.

Looking up a moment later, he glanced at his daughter's face, expecting some cheery response. But that face was grave; deep seriousness sat upon it—and the eyes that looked into her father's were filled with something like reproach, yet something like yearning too. "What makes ye so solemn, girl?" he asked a little impatiently; "sure ye look like there was a wake, an' ye didn't get axed to it."

Nora gazed for a full half-minute before she spoke. "If you keep on at the—the business—father, I suppose the others will do the same, won't they?"

"Sartin sure," responded Dinny, assuming a jaunty air.

"Jock Taylor, at the Queen's Arms? And that new one—Barney Flynn, at the Commercial—they'll both keep on their bars, won't they?"

Dinny nodded, too busily employed upon the egg before him to look up.

"Well, they're both vultures," Nora responded with unwonted warmth, her tone low and tense—"especially that Flynn man; I hate him the most."

Dinny glanced up inquiringly.

"I was at Hanton's last night," she went on. "They have a little boy, as you know; he used to be in my class. And he has hip disease—he's in bed. Well, a few of us tried to brighten up his Christmas a little. We got some bits of toys for little Tod—a little toy watch, and a Noah's ark, and a horn, I think—some little trinkets, anyway. And do you know what happened them, father?—do you know, I say?"

Dinny looked up in amazement. The words seemed to come out aflame; and when he cast his eyes towards his daughter, they beheld her leaning far over the table towards him, the lithe form rigid in its intensity, the cheeks flaming, the eyes glowing with a weird fire that burned through the veil of tears, the lips trembling with passion.

"No—sure I don't know annythin' about it,"

Dinny answered; but the words faltered as they came.

"You know that little Tod's father—you know that Dick Hanton drinks—that he has for years?"

Dinny nodded. He was strangely pale.

"Well, I was there last night. Mrs. Hanton sent for me—and I found poor little lame Tod crying and sobbing as if his heart would break. And he kept calling for his toys: 'I want my watch and chain'—I remember that particularly; I shall never forget it till I die. And do you know what had happened to his toys, father?"

Dinny spoke never a word. But his face was white.

"His father took them while he was asleep—he had to slip the little watch from under Tod's pillow—and he took them to Barney Flynn's barroom. *And he got drink for them*," the girl standing now, her quivering figure drawn to its full height, her hands held before her face as if in horror, yet somehow in a strange uncanny way pointing towards her father. "And he came home while I was there—he was drunk—and little Tod kept crying for his toys. And he told Tod's mother to make him stop it; she fell to crying, her face buried in her apron. And he came up behind her—and *he struck her* where she stood," the words coming out with a gasp, each

one expelled by itself from the quivering lips. "And ——"

"By God, I'll kill him," came like the outbreak of a storm from Dinny. He too was standing now—and his livid face was working as if sudden convulsion had seized him. "I'd choke him like a weasel—an' I'll smash Flynn's face—I'll help *him* to where he'll sizzle like a herrin', the damn man-eater that he is," smiting the table with his ponderous fist till the egg that Dinny had forsaken leaped from its plate and crashed upon the floor. It was a strange sight; there they stood, the father and the daughter, their features strangely similar, and both aflame with the selfsame passion, the table between them as they stood, one at either end, their faces flashing each to the other. The one was aglow with a strong man's wrath, heavily lowering; the other, the face of youth and beauty, burning with a flame no less intense, an anger no less passionate.

"Wait," she cried hotly, holding up her hand to silence him, "wait—for I'm not through yet. While we were sitting there—after he struck her—Jennie came home. Jennie is their eldest girl—and she works at the Queen's Arms. Well, she came in—and she was crying bitterly too; we were all crying, father. And I'll tell you what it was about. Jennie waits on table at the Queen's Arms, at Jock Taylor's

tavern. You know that. Well, she came in—and she undid the corner of her shawl, crying, and she gave her mother a dollar and fifteen cents—that was all she had, out of her whole month's wages. And the mother needed the money so—it nearly killed me to see the poor thing's pain and disappointment. It seems Jennie's father has been drinking there—and he charged a lot of it—and Taylor *kept it out of Jennie's wages*," the words coming out again with a sort of cry, the willowy form again leaning far over the table, the trembling hands again outstretched towards her father. "He kept it out of Jennie's wages, father—and she cried so bitterly when she took her poor pittance out of her shawl. Oh, it was terrible," and with this Nora turned in a flood of tears, making her way towards the stair.

Dinny gazed after her a moment, then sank slowly to his chair and buried his face in his hands. For ten minutes or more, tumultuous minutes, he remained bowed and silent. Then he arose, his pale face set and stern, and went into the bar. It was early, and no customers had yet arrived. He unlocked the till, took something out, then went to the foot of the stair and called his daughter. She came down in a moment, her eyes showing traces of the storm.

"Here," he said, in a strangely gentle voice, "here,

take this to Hanton's; them there bills you give to Jennie. An' this here," pushing another note into her hand, "I want ye to get enough toys for that there little gaffer to smother himself in—annything ye can get annywhere—an' do it this mornin'."

Then he took another bill, thrust it into his vest pocket, and went out to the street. He had not long to search.

"Sam," he said, when he had found the trusted crony for whom he was looking, "here's five dollars, Sam. Go on down to the Commercial, to Barney Flynn's place; he got some toys yesterday—from a customer—a watch an' chain, I think, an' a ark, an' a whustle, or somethin' like that—an' I want ye to buy 'em back—get them at anny price. Ye can keep the change—only get 'em an' fetch them wid ye, bring them to me. I want them bad," as he gave some further details to the wondering Sam.

It was not quite half an hour till Sam was back. The toys were with him, wrapped in some stained brown paper. Dinny took them solemnly, carried them in silence up to his room and spread them on the bed. Tears streamed from the gazing eyes as he touched them, one by one, and almost reverently.

Then he carefully lifted the mattress, and stowed the little trinkets away beneath it; all except the

Noah's ark, which, owing to its size, had to be concealed beneath the bed.

"An' it was his own father that done that thing," he murmured in a broken voice; "his own daddy—oh, God!"

XXII

WHEN THE DEVIL DRIVES

FOR nearly a year previous to the incident now to be recorded, Tim Loftus had been fighting a good fight against his ancient enemy, the drink. For Tim had reformed. And the cause of it all had been this—that there had come to him, and to his sad and broken wife, the belated gift of a little child; which, promptly christened Tim by the mother's insistent wish, had taken its place as the idol of his heart, the arrears of a father's love gushing like a spring from the long arid plain of that father's soul.

So Tim had sworn off—for the baby's sake, he would drink no more. Then did happiness roll back like a flood upon the long desolated home; and the baby's mother rejoiced exceedingly, making no secret of her belief in God—which, after all is said and done, is the great and inclusive creed, beyond which the most saintly can scarcely go.

But the Enemy of Souls, as Dr. Leitch would have described that baneful spirit, was loath to surrender a trophy so fairly won as Tim. And of all who begrudged Tim his new-found liberty there was none who brooked it so ill, or who so ardently longed to

terminate it, as Jock Taylor, Dispenser of Hospitalities at The Queen's Arms Tavern, as is well known already. Especially grievous to Jock's sensitive spirit was the likelihood that Tim would even vote for the abolition of the bar, so far may a man carry his fanaticism when once he enters on that misguided path; beginning as an abstainer, he soon deteriorates into a prohibitionist, as reckless of the liberties of other people as he has been wasteful of his own. This, at least, was the doleful view that Jock Taylor took of the situation—and he made no secret of his fear that Tim would soon be so lost to all sense of decency as to cast his vote after a fashion that would insult the very Profession of which he had been once a prosperous and honoured member.

Thence came the tragedy. It was just about one week before the day of voting that Tim, his resolution at the highest pitch, was passing the Queen's Arms. Jock accosted him. Tim, responsive to the courtesy but still fixed in his principle, sat for half an hour or so in the outer hall conversing with his old time friend.

"I won't ask you in, Timmie," Jock said at length —"an' I won't offer you any of the hard stuff; I know that's agin your pledge. But I've got some o' the best buttermilk in there that a man ever put inside of him; got it from the milkman, an' he told

me it came from the Menzies' farm—so this is something extry, for it looks like young Menzies might be our next M. P.," winking jocularly towards Tim —"that is, if Dustan don't put a head on him. Wait a minute, Tim, an' I'll fetch it out."

Thence came the tragedy. For how was poor Tim to see the cruel leer on Taylor's face as he bent a moment behind the bar, the glass of buttermilk in his hand, pouring into it a tiny draught from the fatal bottle that Tim had conquered at such cost?

But Tim knew a moment later. The first mouthful told him; and, with a dreadful look at Taylor, and with a fearful oath, he smashed the glass to atoms on the floor. But it was too late. The hell-like fiend had sprung to life within him. Desperate and maddened, he shambled over to his enemy, as if he would wreak vengeance on him. Taylor smiled, rose, walked calmly into the bar. *Tim followed him* —it was midnight before he appeared again, flung forth by his destroyer.

Then ensued a wild week of riot and excess. Every cent on which Tim could lay his hands was spent at the bidding of his newly awakened appetite. It was not much that the poor fellow could command; for what money he had in his possession the day of his relapse soon found its way into Jock Taylor's insatiable till. That was the exact moment

at which Jock had flung his friend out into the dark —when his last kopek had been duly delivered across the bar.

This was, among his friends, the principal ground of hope that Tim would sober up—viz., that he could not lay his hands on the wherewithal to prolong his spree. Shamelessly, the inward fire consuming him, he importuned friend and foe alike for any pittance that would feed the flame. But there was, and to their credit be it said, a deep and widespread sense of pain among the citizens of Glen Ridge as they saw poor Tim once more borne out to sea. Money, his wife had none; all who cared for him refused him sternly; Jock Taylor and his kind answered all his piteous appeal with the assurance that he was fit company for swine, and spurned him from their doors.

To add to the bitter misery of it all, Tim's baby fell deadly sick just two days after the outbreak came. The doctor hinted darkly at the possibility that the trouble had been caused by the mother's milk; which was from that mother's breast; which breast was hard by that mother's broken heart. In any case it was soon evident that the sickness was unto death—and on the morning of the fourth day the little life fluttered into rest.

It was the night before the funeral, and a little

group of sympathizing friends were gathered in Tim's lowly and desolated home. Dr. Leitch was there, of course; bent and feeble now, but clothed with the ever increasing power of ever deepening love and tenderness. It was the mother who had sent for him.

But Tim had sent for Dinny—and Dinny was there. The next day was the day of the momentous vote; but, absorbed though he was, he had never hesitated. In the hour of his desolation, of his fearful struggle, the unhappy Tim had involuntarily turned to his old-time friend; forgetful of Dinny's occupation, careless of his association with the dread thing that had caused his ruin, Tim remembered only the loyal and loving heart, the unflinching friendship of a man whose presence he dimly felt would help to comfort and strengthen him. So Dinny had come; indeed he had been with Tim nearly all the afternoon, agonized as he witnessed the fearful struggle of a man torn between the highest and the lowest passions of his being. Trembling and gasping, just as the evening was deepening into darkness, he had taken Dinny aside and piteously craved from him just enough of money to buy what would brace him for the dreadful night—and those who saw Dinny's face when he came back, firm in his refusal, said it was like the face of death.

It was about ten o'clock at night—and every heart in that little circle was athrob with pity; for all felt the fearfulness of the grim fight that Tim was waging with his enemy. His eyes were wild and bloodshot, his face pale and haggard, his lips cracked and dry; his whole frame trembled when he sat, staggered when he tried to walk. Thus did he tread the wine-press alone.

"Let us go in," Dr. Leitch whispered to the little circle; "let us all go in—where his child is lying. And we'll have a little prayer beside the coffin—then we'll come out—and we'll leave him alone with the baby. If God can use any means to cast the evil spirit out, surely He will use that," his voice choking as he spoke.

All bowed their heads assenting; together they went into the tiny parlour, Dinny supporting Tim as they went. And there, in waxen beauty, lay the little child; youngest of all, yet master of all; untutored, unlearned, yet familiar with the Mystery that baffles earth's greatest and wisest; silent, yet commanding all to silence. Like one in royal state, the baby lay in solemn pomp transcendent; clad in the sweetest of white robes and the daintiest of silken shoes procured by loving hands, the very breath of purity exuded from the breathless form.

The simple prayer was broken by poor Tim's con-

vulsive sobs. Rising at its close, Dr. Leitch led the way without. The others followed; then noiselessly, reverently, the aged minister closed the door and left those twain alone—the storm-tossed man and the untroubled babe.

All remained in the outer room save Dinny. Choking, he made his way outside. Walking up and down, his head uncovered, he found himself a moment later opposite the window of the death chamber. Unable to control his gaze, he permitted it to rest on the scene within. Rivetted and entranced, like one under mesmeric power, he tiptoed close up to the window, his breath coming in quick spasms as he looked. The spectacle was fearsome to behold. For a little time poor Tim stood at the head of the coffin, gazing upon the silent face. Then mighty sobs shook his frame; the tears coursed down his cheeks like a flood; he knelt and covered the baby's brow with kisses. Then he rose and gazed again. But now his face was terrible to look upon; the storm of battle swept over it, and the man's bloodshot eyes seemed to leap forth as though they confronted some deadly foe actually in the flesh before him; great drops of sweat broke out on his forehead—once he swept his hand swiftly across it. His face worked convulsively; his pale lips could be seen as they moved in some unearthly muttering. Suddenly he

fell on his knees as if in an agony of prayer. A moment later he struggled to his feet again. Then, clenching his hands to his head—he surrendered! And the stamp of Eternity—and Doom—was on his face.

Stealthily, the features relaxing almost to a grin, now stiffening again in strange cunning and resolve, he came closer to the coffin; averting his eyes, lest they should behold the majestic face, he softly thrust one hand beneath the coffin lid that half covered the form within. It was but a moment; the hand reappeared—a silken slipper in it. Thrusting it into his pocket, back went the hand beneath the lid again; again it reappeared, again the tiny silken thing flashed in the lamplight, and again the man's hand went to his pocket.

Then, straightening himself and pausing to get control, he walked softly to the door, opened it, and passed out through the silent company to the porch. The unconscious watchers, marvelling, regarded him with silent awe. Dinny crouched low in the shadow, the sweat falling from his face to the ground beneath.

Then he followed him. Stealthily, at a little distance, with clenched teeth and painful breath, he pursued Tim's shadowy figure as it disappeared in the darkness. It was easy at first, for Tim's pace was slow; but by and by—for what reason let those tell

who know that hell-born haste—the unhappy man quickened his gait to a sort of shambling run, looking not to right or left.

It was as Dinny had feared—that was what had brought the sweat out upon his brow—and his face worked in convulsive spasms, almost as Tim's had done, when he halted, panting, a few yards from the door of the Queen's Arms, its solitary light blinking through the darkness. Already the door had opened, then quickly closed again—having swallowed up the father of the child who lay dead at home.

With catlike tread Dinny crept close to the curtained window. One side he tried, in vain. Swiftly he sprang to the farther side ; the opening was but a seam—yet it was enough. And the hot blood mounted to his face—and the cold sweat broke out afresh—and his parched lips muttered he knew not what—and the devil of rage and contempt and revenge and strength stormed within his heart till that heart seethed with madness. For he saw—he saw. Nothing but two men! But one was behind the bar, portly and smiling ; the other was before it, corpse-like and appealing. And his hand was extended, pointing, craving as it pointed. And now on the bar—between the two—there lay a pair of tiny silken slippers. And then they disappeared—on the further side of that polished bar. And there—

where they lay a moment before—stood now a black bottle, laden well. And already Tim was drinking deep—and the great agony, the savage bitterness of the long conflict, was past and gone.

Dinny never knew how long he crouched there that night; whether hours or minutes, he could not have told. But there he crouched, gazing up at the silent stars—gazing into Eternity. He was still there when Tim came out, staggering off into the darkness, happy now in his maudlin mutterings. This seemed to rouse Dinny from his trance. He rose, paying no heed to Tim, and crept over to the door. Then he turned and went away. His aimless steps led him into the garden behind the house; involuntarily, as if still unawaked, yet as if possessed with dreamy madness, he tried his strength on a maple sapling beside the fence. He tore the treelet from its roots as though it had been a corn-stalk, then bent the tough trunk over his knee and snapped it into two. The might of his burning soul seemed to be loaned, for this hour at least, to the frame that was already feeling the infirmity of deepening years. He smiled—he was still a strong man, thank God, even if so far from young; thus ran his thought. Then sudden frenzy seemed to seize him—and he flung his coat from his back, and stood with extended arms beneath the stars. He felt their

quivering muscles; then he laughed, put on his coat again, and started back towards the door. Pausing, his foot struck something that rang almost with a metallic sound; he stooped, picked it up—it was the handle of a rake, hickory—and his face brightened greedily as he swung it almost joyfully, the hot hands gripping it in a fearful vise. Then he laughed softly again, loosening his hold, threw the thing away—always walking on towards the door in the distance.

He never paused this time—but walked straight in. The door was still unlocked; the lamp was still burning in the bar—but it was empty. Following the sound of a slight noise, Dinny made his way along the hall, doubtless more noiselessly than he knew, and, turning sharply to the left, he found himself face to face with Taylor. The landlord of the Queen's Arms was seated at a table, generously laden with the features of a substantial evening meal, such as it was Taylor's custom to dispose of before retiring.

Dinny blinked a moment in the sudden light. Taylor was standing, having leaped to his feet when he heard the footfalls on the floor; seeing who the intruder was, he sat down again as if to resume his meal. But there was something terrible in the face of the man standing at the door.

"Come on, Riley," Taylor began after the first surprised greeting was over, "an' have some supper along o' me. The family 's all gone to bed. Here, have some o' this sherry," pushing the decanter in the direction of his still silent and unmoving guest. "To-morrow's votin' day, you know—mebbe it's to-day; ain't just sure what o'clock it is now, but I fancy this is to-morrow," with a feeble laugh as he noticed the eyes of flame still fixed on him; "an' we'll just drink to our victory in advance," he went on, his nervousness increasing; "an' there ain't anybody's done as much to win it as you have, Dinny—even if you did give me a pretty hard crack, with that fracas about me an' Dr. Leitch, you know—but you've had more influence than all the rest of us put together," the words running into one another as he uttered them. "Sit down, Riley; what the devil ails you?" for the man standing in the door had never moved.

A strange light was in Dinny's eyes, and they never shifted their gaze from Taylor. "Are you mad, man?" the latter suddenly demanded, simulating wrath; "you act like that drunken sot I just let out—he's got a dead kid at home, but I guess it's better off where it's gone to, poor little ——"

It was a strange cry, half of anguish, half of wolfish rage, that broke from Dinny's lips; that almost broke

from them, at least, muffled even as it came, stifled, so that none but they two could hear it. But it came, something between a sob and a yelp, as he leaped in swift noiselessness to where Taylor sat. Towering above him, he glowered down at him, the veins standing out on his moist brow, his arm uplifted, the muscles standing forth almost as in the days of youth. Surely Taylor knew what it was that had so maddened the man beside him. He sprang to his feet, it is true; but it was the movement of a coward—and his face, ashy pale, his blanched lips and already sunken eyes, bespoke his surrender. Dinny's arm was uplifted—but he did not strike. He stood a moment, the terrible eyes transfixing Taylor with their steel-like glance. Then suddenly he paused, putting his hands over his face. Taylor began to back away. Looking again, Dinny gave an almost imperceptible nod of his head, a strange smile upon his face as he beckoned the wretched man to follow him. Turning, he made his way slowly back to the hall, Taylor involuntarily following. Along the narrow corridor he crept, glancing back once or twice in the semi-darkness; Taylor hurried at the look.

A moment later both men were in the barroom. Then Dinny turned, waiting till Taylor should be abreast of him—and together they walked up to the bar. A lamp stood upon it. Dinny walked behind

the counter, his searching eye sweeping everything about him. Suddenly he stopped; then he beckoned Taylor in behind the bar. The man obeyed. When they were close together, the Irishman, with one swift breath, blew out the light. A muffled cry broke from Taylor, silenced in an instant. Without a word, moving in shadowy silence, Dinny groped his way to a half-open drawer below the shelves, stooped down, picked something up; creeping, he returned, close up to Taylor. And then, without word or sign, the dread habiliments of death gleaming slightly in the darkness, he slowly held the tiny slippers up till they were right in Taylor's face—the trembling creature could feel Dinny's hot breath on his cheek. A moment he held them there, Taylor's head thrown back in horror. Then he let them fall, and the noise of their falling could be heard as they struck the floor; wherewith, coming closer, his hand felt its swift way up Taylor's chest, up, onward, till it crept in close to his throat—with a clutch like the snapping of a spring his fingers closed on the quivering flesh, and, steadying the form with his other hand, he backed the struggling Taylor slowly to the wall and held him as in a vise of steel. All unavailing were his frantic and oft-repeated efforts at resistance. There was no word, almost no sound except a faint and quickly stifled protest from the

limp and terror-stricken man—but the dread process went on like some dim pantomime, and the breath of Doom was about them both.

With a mighty effort, and before it was too late, Dinny relaxed his grip, his arms falling limp to his side. Taylor was gasping, trembling. Then Dinny moved back from him, his face working and twitching in its fearful struggle, the blood flown from lip and cheek—but the all-mastering eyes still gleamed in the darkness. Taylor followed him, obedient to some nameless bidding—and Dinny backed out around the bar, his victim unreleased, till they both stood beside the window. The lower part was curtained, but the large upper panes were open to the sky. And there, his eye roving upward at last, Dinny stood, pointing far aloft with outreaching arm, one long finger extended towards the distant stars.

"Don't ye believe there's anny God?" he whispered hoarsely, still pointing to the sky.

Silence reigned, deep as the grave itself.

"Don't ye believe there's anny God?" came again, a little lower this time, in a strange guttural whisper, a maddened soul surging through the words. He bended closer to the cowering man.

Taylor nodded; looked out of the window; then looked down.

A long silence followed. "I was goin' to inter-

duce yez—when I came in. I was goin' to kill ye," came at last from Dinny in a hoarse whisper. "But I won't—if He can wait, I can," looking long and steadily at the tranquil stars.

He turned at last and moved slowly from the room. He had gained the hall and was almost at the outer door when suddenly he retraced his steps to where the still shuddering man stood in the dark. "Lock that there door—when I get out," his words scarcely audible, every one struggling from between the teeth so tightly set.

Then he crept back to the door with hurried pace, opened it, and went out into the night.

XXIII

THE BITTER FRUIT OF VICTORY

THE following day was a red-letter one for Glen Ridge. All through its busy hours the conflict waged; the jingle of sleigh bells was heard on every hand as busy partizans hurried here and there, bearing the voters to the polls. Men who had passed fifty years of deep tranquillity frankly abandoned themselves that day to such bitterness as moral struggles alone can breed. Arguments were bandied back and forth as men met and tarried for a moment on the corners of the streets, hurrying on again to the business of the hour. For the night was coming, and then would the verdict of the day's struggle be irrevocably fixed.

Chief among the workers for the continuance of the bar were, as a matter of course, the respective proprietors of the taverns whose trade was now in peril. From morn till noon, from noon till shadowy eve, did Jock Taylor and Barney Flynn give them-

selves to the saving of their craft. A host of trusty henchmen obeyed their bidding and did all within their power to prosper the labours of their hands. Every tavern, as by law decreed, was tightly closed; but their owners, upheld by visions of long years of activity yet before them, fought as though that day were to be their last. But Dinny Riley sat alone within his darkened house.

The evening fell. Nora, returning from some trifling errand, was the first to hear the news. Unnerved and pale, she sought her father where he sat alone.

"The By-law 's beaten," she said, and surely the deepest note in her voice was sadness; "they've failed to carry it—the temperance people acknowledge their defeat."

Dinny looked up quickly, but answered never a word. The girl waited; no response, no sign, came from her father. She was about to turn away, when suddenly a noise, like to that a mob of men alone can make, fell upon her ears. Startled, she went to the window, peering out from behind the heavy curtain. A moment later her father was looking over her shoulder.

Nora was the first to interpret the significance of the gathering, as she gazed upon the jostling crowd upon the street. "It's you they want, father," she

said in a moment—"listen, they're calling for you. They want you to come outside."

Dinny did listen. And what he heard soon left no doubt as to the purpose and desire of the crowd.

"Come on out, Dinny," a voice called above the din. "Come on—we've beaten the fanatics to a finish! And you're the man that's done more than anybody else to get us the victory. Speech! Speech! Come on out, Dinny—and let us tell you what we owe you—you're the man that's won the day for us."

Dinny glanced out furtively from the corner of the curtain. A great crowd it was, and every man among them was evidently the friend of the traffic in which he was engaged. A motley throng; some in scant clothing, some in shabbiness approaching rags; some with the bended backs of age, some with faces flushed and bloated, some with youthful countenances already growing hard and coarse. A score or more of them were nothing more than lads—and Dinny shuddered at the sight. But one and all kept clamouring for him amid resounding din.

Dinny groaned, falling back from the window. "Who's there?" he inquired faintly of his daughter; "d'ye know anny av them, Nora?"

Nora peeped through again, more and more mystified by her father's strange demeanour.

"Jim Forrest's there," she said after a pause; "and Judd—and Charlie Boyce, and Sam Cassidy, and Pete Garlick," naming some of the most conspicuous devotees of "the Trade" in all the town. "Pete's got his little boy with him," she added.

Dinny suppressed a groan. "Say, might Barney Flynn be there?" he inquired after a moment, still crouching far back in the gloom.

Nora looked. "Yes, Barney's there," she answered in a moment; "he's lighting a torch."

Dinny suppressed a couple of words that deserved to be suppressed.

"Jock Taylor ain't there, is he?" glancing up slightly as he spoke.

Nora looked again. "Oh, yes, he is—certainly Jock's there—he's right at the front. There he is, see—smoking a cigar."

Dinny groaned aloud, his face now buried in his hands. Dense silence fell within, broken only by the continued clamour from without. Then suddenly the proprietor of The Buck Tavern arose and made his way towards the stairs.

"Don't you want a light, father?" Nora asked as he fumbled his way through the darkness.

"No," he said bitterly, "I don't want no light—a light wouldn't be anny good to me to-night. Oh, God! to think I've come to this," as he stumbled on.

He paused midway up the stairs. "Blinds all down, girl?" he asked brusquely.

"Yes, father, they're all down."

"Ye ain't afeard o' the dark, be ye, girl?"

"No, father—why?"

"Then put out that there lamp, will ye—mebbe they'll unnerstand."

"Yes, father—and I'll tell them to go away if you like."

"No," he almost thundered from the stairs; "nary a word, I tell ye—not to the likes o' them. Is the door locked, Nora?"

"No, father."

"Then lock it, girl—an' don't disturb me till the mornin'."

On Dinny went, walking heavily, till he reached his room. Gradually the noise below subsided, the disappointed crowd reluctantly disappearing and going mystified upon its way. But Dinny sat alone on his bed in the darkened room; groping beneath the mattress and fumbling under the bed, he produced the pitiful toys, which, scarcely discernible in the darkness, yet told their bitter story, spelling it out as in letters of living flame. He sat staring at them, sometimes in stony silence, sometimes rocking to and fro. Few words escaped him, and those that came were in broken mutterings.

"Oh, God!" he murmured, bending now over the little watch and chain, and the garish horn, both of which were resting in his hands; "oh, God!—an' this is the glory an' honour av Dinny Riley's life! If my father knowed this, sure he'd turn over wid sorrow in his grave. Oh, Lord!—an' them blood-suckers considers Dinny Riley their leader an' their king—an' they wanted to crown him wid glory an' honour. An' they didn't do anny av it in derision—they really thought it av me, sure they thought it av me," and he bent low again in the bitterness of his shame.

When the night at last was hushed in silence Dinny lighted a tallow candle and began his task. It was as formidable as momentous. He was about to renounce forever the business of his lifetime; the industry that had been his livelihood in the past—and in which, till twenty-four hours before, had reposed all his hope for the future.

But it was over now—to be laid aside forever. And Dinny's last ambition, amid the ruin of his broken hopes, was to make fitting announcement of the same. The early morning had dawned upon him before the intimation was penned to his satisfaction. It was written in a large scrawling hand, and becomingly underlined:

CLOSED in regards
to its pressent manigement
till the
JUDGMINT DAY.
D. Riley
Propryetor.

The gray dawn was slowly breaking when Dinny crept stealthily outside the weather-beaten tavern, a hammer in one hand, the proclamation in the other, and a copious supply of tacks in his mouth. He had already fastened two corners of the manifesto, when suddenly he stopped, looked long at the wooden tablet above the door, then sat down and pondered.

The notice was the same as was usually posted above country taverns; it read as follows:

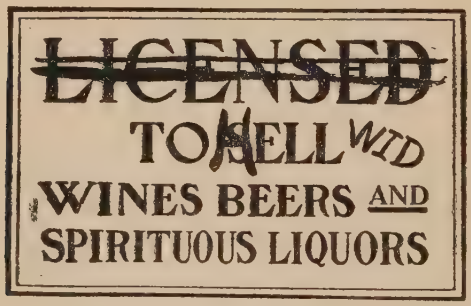
LICENSED
TO SELL
WINES BEERS AND
SPIRITUOUS LIQUORS

Dinny gazed long, his brows knitted in thought. After a period of severe pondering, a grim and half

comical light came upon his face. He tore his paper placard from the wall, threw the hammer on the ground, spat out the surviving tacks, and went into the house.

A minute or two later he reappeared, bearing in his hand a pot of dark paint, the handle of the brush protruding.

Then he fell to work. Five minutes later he descended from the box on which he had stood to do his work. And now the sign read thus:



And thus, when the awaking tides of life coursed again along the street, did the startled citizens of Glen Ridge read Dinny's message of fond farewell.

XXIV

AN HEIR BY HONOUR BOUND

NORA was at the door, gazing down the street. The sun was setting, and she knew it was time for weary labourers to turn their steps towards home. Already the throng of toilers, their eager faces stained with the work of the day, were passing by her as they hurried on, visions of wife and child quickening their pace. Nearly all had passed before she descried, far in the rear, the figure of her father, her eyes brightening as she recognized the dear familiar face. It had never been more dear; nor had he ever been more her hero than when he had sought and found employment among the lowly toilers in the foundry. Yet as he came nearer the glow vanished from the maiden's eyes, a look of anxious care displacing it. For she could not fail to recognize the change that was coming—not slowly now, but swiftly—over the one she held so dear. Whether it was due to the new and confining work that had come so suddenly, or to the wrench from all his old relations that his unfaltering

purpose had demanded, or to the pressure and burden of sudden poverty, or to the weight of advancing years and the inevitable infirmities that they bring, she could not have said.

But in any case the fact remained that Dinny was almost an old man now. Not only old, but broken, Nora thought bitterly to herself as she watched the still stalwart form, yet sadly tired and spent from the toil of the day, pressing slowly on towards the little house on the outskirts of the town that now served them as a home.

"Tired out, father?" she asked as she drew him within the door, kissing him in welcome, and taking his dinner pail from his hand.

"It's that there infernal bell," he answered, throwing himself into a chair.

"That bell!" echoed the girl; "what bell, father?"

"That's the part that's killin' me," he explained; "it's this havin' to go to work when some lobster rings a bell—or blows a whustle—an' dingin' at it till it rings again; that's what I hate about this new job o' mine," he elaborated, a wry face turned towards Nora; "think I'll go to bed, girl," he added, "soon 's I get a bite to ate—supper ready?"

It was ready, smoking hot; and soon the two were

in the middle of it. But a sudden interruption came in the form of a knock at the half-open door. Answering the summons, Dinny was unduly prolonged without. After the lapse of perhaps a quarter of an hour or so he returned to where Nora still sat beside the half-finished meal. His agitation was evident at a glance.

"I may as well tell ye all about it," he began excitedly after a brief silence, unbroken by inquiry on Nora's part. "It's a message from Hastie's Mills —from that there McParty man."

"McParty!" echoed Nora, paling; "don't you mean McLarty, father?" her own agitation almost as marked as his.

"Yes, yes, it's the same man," Dinny retorted briefly; "an' he sent a message to me—he wants me to come to him. You know all about—about who he is, Nora. An' he's sick—very sick—dyin' mebbe. An' he wants me—an' I guess I ought to go. I never seen the day when I wouldn't do a turn for a man that's down—I don't care who he is or what he done. So I think I'll go to-morrow—it'll take all day, I'm afeared," sighing lightly as he spoke.

Nora's words of reply were few. She knew her father's resolve was already taken; and, besides, the mention of the McLarty name was usually enough

to seal her lips to silence, to touch her cheek to whiteness.

"I hate to do widout the day's wage," Dinny was affirming the next morning, reëchoing the plaint of the previous evening, and getting the words out as best he could while Nora struggled with a very unruly tie; "aisy there, my darlint—sure ye're chokin' aff my windpipe; there, that's better. Yes, I hate like all consarned to lose the day's pay—but if McParty wants me—and the cratur' seems terrible set on seein' me—I guess I'll have to go. What the divil d'ye suppose the old dodger wants me for, Nora? D'ye suppose it'll be spiritual consolation he'll be axin' av me? Funny now, ain't it—for an old curmudgeon like that to send for Dinny Riley when he's goin' to kick the bucket?"

"Don't worry about that, father—but I confess I'd like to know. Perhaps he wants to tell you what a hero you are—he ought to." Dinny laughed, but made no reply.

"Are you sure you know the way, father?" Nora asked after a little silence.

"Could find it in the dark—that's bully now," tracing the conquered tie with his fingers; "sure ye mind the time I drove it afore, when I went to see this

same McParty man—the time I saved poor old Ainslie from the talons av the cratur'. Niver done annything that gave me more satisfaction like, I don't think," Dinny ruminated, now engaged in brushing violently at a rather rusty coat.

"You're getting it pretty hard now, as a consequence of that, father?" Nora made bold to remark.

"Och, I'm all right," was the cheery reply; "sure hard work's good for a man—an' it's clean money I'm makin' now, though I didn't think I'd iver see the day when I'd own up to it," he added seriously. "The only thing that worrits me, my darlint, is in regards to yer own self," tenderly stroking his daughter's cheek as he spoke. "Ye can't always have yer old dad wid ye, girl; an' sometimes it kind o' hurts me, wonnerin' what ye'll do after—after I'm not near hand ye, like," the gentle eyes moistening as they turned solicitously on the girl beside him.

Nora silenced him with a kiss. And, with many an injunction as to the care he must take of himself while away, she dismissed him on his journey to Hastie's Mills.

Many tender memories surged about Dinny that day as he arrived once more at the unforgotten tavern of the little hamlet; the saintly face of Arthur Ainslie rose again and again before him—and he stood alone, with uncovered head, above the couch

where the dying elder had asked for the parting vow. But he had little time to spend in reverie. A glance at the darkening sky warned him of an approaching storm—and, eager to reach the scene of action before it should break, he bent his steps towards the house to which the prostrate McLarty had so mysteriously bidden him.

He was just in time; for no sooner had the woman attendant—the same who had received Margaret Menzies—admitted him within the spacious door than a few swift flashes of lightning, followed by the accompanying roar, advised him that the outbreak was at hand. Weird enough it all was as he sat in the shadowy parlour, its stern outline and antique furnishings standing out every now and then in the blinding lane of light flashed from the angry skies. The woman, with noiseless tread, appeared presently, and with a taciturn "Mr. McLarty wants you to come up at once," led the way up the darksome stairs.

The man had changed since Dinny saw him last; those ghostly touches which attest that the soul is girded for its long journey were evident at a glance. Something in Mr. McLarty's stern salutation, motioning to a chair beside the bed, made it abundantly clear that he wished to proceed without delay to the business of the hour.

"Shut that door tight," he said without further parley as soon as the woman had retired—"and turn the key in the lock."

Dinny obeyed; then sat down again.

The man fixed his lustrous eyes on him. Long he stared, unspeaking. Dinny, of as honest soul as ever shone from honest eyes, met the gaze in silent calm. Surely it did not need the keenness so often loaned to those about to bid farewell to Time, to discover the faithfulness and truth that could be read in every line of the mobile Irish face. Once McLarty turned away—then, fixing his gaze again on the man beside the bed, he peered into the answering eyes.

"Light that lamp," were his next words; "it'll soon be dark."

Dinny did as he was directed, again resuming his seat.

"You know who I am?" the man began abruptly.

Dinny nodded.

"And you know Margaret Menzies?" Again Dinny gave consent.

"And her boy? You know, I suppose—you know who *he* is—you know he's mine." The words made Dinny start in his chair. All they had told, he already knew. But there was something so Eternal in them; partly wail, partly pæan; some vagrant notes that spoke of love and of the long ago—

of shame, and fear—yet of possession, almost of savage pride, the far-off strain of the fatherly refusing to be silenced by all that sought to hush and smother it.

"I knew ye was his father," Dinny said, steadying his voice with difficulty.

"I *am* his father," the man answered rigidly. "And you know I'm dying?" he added, his lips settling sternly.

"Isn't there anny hope?" poor Dinny asked sympathetically.

"This is no time for that kind of talk," the man returned grimly; "a day or two at longest and you'll get your answer. And I suppose you know I'm rich?"

Dinny nodded, trying hard to make the nod a cheerful one.

"And you know I'm—I'm going to leave it all behind me?"

"It's a common kind av a custom," said Dinny timidly, venturing, but shyly, on a reply not altogether dull.

"Well," and the man lifted his head feebly as he spoke, "that's the business that made me send for you. Who do you think I ought to leave my money to?—tell me frankly. This is a time for plain speaking."

Dinny never hesitated. "Them two," he answered swiftly, pointing over his shoulder in the direction he imagined was towards Glen Ridge.

"They wouldn't take it," came the answer sharp and clear.

Dinny sat forward a little in his chair.

"They wouldn't take it—at least *she* wouldn't. That's settled—I know her—she'd see me in hell first. And I don't blame her," as he lay back again, his eyes fairly burning as they clung to Dinny's face.

"That's just the kind av a woman she is, sir," Dinny broke forth after a long and emotional silence. "There isn't annybody knows her better than me—I seen her first the day she came to Glen Ridge, an' ——"

McLarty stopped him with a violent gesture. "And yet, there's nobody in God's world has a right to what I've got—except them, except that boy especially—except my son," the two last words coming with the same strange swell as before. "Is there?"

"It's right ye are," Dinny almost whispered. He was leaning forward now.

"Riley, I know all about you!" was the next sentence, every word uttered slowly by itself.

Dinny gazed, marvelling.

"I know what you did—for old Ainslie. I guess I ought to know. And what you've done for lots of people. And I want to tell you this, Riley—I trust you. I knew you were a man the first time I saw you. I trust you, sir?" the last coming as an interrogative.

Dinny nodded, very faintly.

"So I'm going to leave all I have—*to you.* To you, sir. Every dollar. There's a lawyer in this house this very minute—my own lawyer—he's down-stairs in the dining-room. And what I have is either in cash or in bonds—in something easily got hold of, anyway. And I'll make it sure as death—and that looks sure enough, God knows. My will is all fixed now—only needs that I sign it—and that 'll be done before you're back to your hotel. No, not a word—wait till I'm through," he almost gasped as Dinny endeavoured to break in; "everything will pass into your hands—all but one or two trifling gifts to the servants. And there's just one condition, Riley!"

He paused, waiting. But no word came. "Why don't you ask me what that condition is?" he demanded warmly, the delay evidently irritating him. "Don't you want to know?"

There was a marvellous expression on Dinny's face. Not joy, not elation—though it was full of light; neither was it one of cunning, or sly shrewd-

ness—though it spoke what the man before him longed to hear.

"Why don't you ask me what that condition is?" he repeated, the words sharp and stern.

"'Cause I know, sir," Dinny answered low, leaning far over towards the bed.

"What is it, Riley?" The prostrate man tried again to raise himself on his pillow.

"It's this—that ye want me to *use it wise an' fair*, like—ain't that it, Mr. McParty? Ye want me to make a good use av it, don't ye, sir?—or, if I had to pass on—like yerself, sir—*to be uncommon careful who I left it to.* To kind av carry out yer wishes, like, sir. Ain't that there the condition, Mr. McParty?" the fixed eyes agleam with the emotion of his soul as he leaned over and whispered to the dying man.

With a great reaction the blood fled from the face upon the pillow. Something akin to peace came over the features of the now relaxed and almost breathless man. For the first time—and the last—Dinny saw a smile pass over the hardened features. Faintly, as if the effort had been too much for him, he moved his hand towards Dinny; the Irishman took it and held it close. The exhausted man turned his eyes towards a flask on the table; Dinny poured out a draught and gave it to him.

His strength, so much as was left, soon returned to him. But still he lay, Dinny's hand in his, a look of triumph, almost of tranquillity, upon his face.

"You can go now," he said shortly; "tell Mrs. Haskin to send the lawyer up. God! but it's a wild night—I wonder if the dead know when it rains like that."

Dinny rose, his lips sealed tight. A slight parting pressure of the hand, and he had turned towards the door. Glancing back, he saw the man motion him to return.

"I trust you," the dying lips faltered as the burning eyes looked up at him again.

Dinny nodded, then turned and went away.

He had closed the door behind him and was out in the gloomy hall, when, obeying a sudden impulse, he turned and reëntered the room. Gliding gently over till he was beside the bed again, he bended low and whispered:

"I think he'll be the next Member av Parlimint."

The dying eyes looked curiously. "Who?" came faintly.

"Yer son," said Dinny, his face suffused with tenderness.

A look of dumb joy leaped to the pallid features. Then they turned cold and gray again, like the clouds when the sun withdraws his light.

Dinny turned again to go. Yet he seemed to find it hard to depart. Hesitating, he lingered a moment, bending lower above the bed.

"Mr. McParty," he said tremblingly.

"Yes," came absently from the man beneath him.

"There isn't annybody God doesn't love—'specially when they're dyin', Mr. McParty," and the strange and broken tones had a power such as mere priesthood never knew.

The man looked wistfully, and moved his hand. Dinny took it, pressing it gently; then he tenderly loosened his clasp and moved silently towards the door. Another long, earnest look—was that love that shone in his eyes?—and he was gone.

Off into the night he drove, facing the cruel storm. Long before he had reached Glen Ridge David McLarty had set forth on that longer journey, the pilgrimage of the unreturning feet.

XXV

THE RIGHT HON., THE PREMIER

THE day of the great political Convention had come at last. The occasion of the gathering was to nominate a candidate to represent the Conservative party at the approaching general election. In fact, the business of the hour was practically to elect the Member for the Dominion House of Commons. For the constituency had been represented by a Conservative as far back as the oldest settler could remember; and as a matter of fact the opposing party, at a similar Convention held a week before, had resolved not to place a candidate in the field, so certain was the issue and so obvious the result of a contest at the polls. Thus it came about, now that the old Member who had so long served them was withdrawing beneath the weight of years, that whoever should be fortunate enough to secure the nomination would by that very achievement stand elected as the representative in the House of Commons for South Waterfield, for such was the title of the constituency.

This of itself was quite enough to throw Glen

Ridge and all the surrounding section into a fever of excitement as the Convention Day drew near. But, more exciting still, it was settled beyond dispute that the choice would be confined to two men, each of whom had a strong and determined following. These two, it need hardly be added, were Arthur Dustan and Irwin Menzies. And both had good ground for hope.

To add to the momentous character of the Convention, it was to be graced by the presence of the most distinguished Canadian of his time. The Prime Minister of the Dominion had consented to be present and address the gathered electors. It was years and years since the Premier had been in Glen Ridge, but none who had seen or heard him then had forgotten his magnetic charm. This, added to his great fame, kindled expectation to the highest pitch.

He had come; Sir John A. had arrived—and the morning had been a gala one for all and sundry. The old Chieftain had met the party leaders in the freeness of familiar intercourse; and new life, as everywhere he moved, leaped within the breasts he had inspired. He had reached the town in the early morning, and had repaired along with a few of the faithful for breakfast at The Buck Tavern, over which Dinny held sway no more.

"Wull ye hae sugar wi' yir porridge?" one of the stalwarts had asked him as the meal began, a venerable Scot who had supported the party faithfully for forty years or more.

"Sugar!" returned the Premier; "sugar with oatmeal porridge! Do you want to insult me, man? Don't you know I was *born there?*—in Glasgow itself—and yet you ask me if I take sugar with my porridge! You must think I'm a degenerate Scot—as well ask me if I sing the Second Paraphase to Annie Laurie. Please pass the cream—and I'll take mine in a cup, the way my ancestors did for a thousand years."

This sterling orthodoxy on the part of the great man was duly communicated to several hangers-on around the tavern door; and, before the time for the great gathering of the afternoon, almost every Scotchman in the riding knew of it. And Sir John's popularity rose upon it as on a gathering tide.

"Look here," the Chieftain whispered a moment later to the man at his right, the President of the Association; "I want you to point out everybody here you think I met when I was last in the riding; you know I never forget a name, or a face—if a little inquiry will prevent it," winking solemnly at his host, "and I don't propose to forget any of these," glancing about the room as he spoke.

It was a moment or two before the Scotchman realized just what was expected of him. But when duly informed he proceeded with gusto to his task, and in a minute or two had armed Sir John with the information he desired. Wherefore, as soon as the meal was over, Sir John made a circle of the room, greeting this man and that by name, making sundry references to their occupations, inquiring of one as to the condition of the crops, of another as to the state of the grocery business, solicitous that still another was by this time quite free from the rheumatism that had troubled him years ago, assuring most of them that they had changed but little since last he saw them, and throwing the whole company into such a state of wondering delight as cannot readily be imagined.

"And do you really think you're going to carry the country at the approaching election?" one of the delegates asked him, all of a tremble with agitated pride as he looked into the great man's face. It was a face worthy of study, with its high and massive brow, the scanty hair falling back from the shapely head; with the semi-serious, semi-merry eyes, deep and powerful; with the square chin and firm set jaw; with the mobile lips, responsive to the last degree; with the bold and commanding nose, most significant feature of the whole striking countenance, in which

penetration and insight and firmness of purpose were so abundantly evident.

"Carry the country?" replied Sir John, scattering a confidential smile among the bystanders; "we'll sweep it like a hurricane does a barn floor in November. Carry it!—I should think so. There's nothing so uncertain, I know, as an election, unless it's a horse-race; but then a horse-race isn't uncertain when it's between a horse and a nag—and a lame nag at that," chuckling as he looked around the company.

"How large a majority do you look for, Sir John?" another asked; not that he cared a fig whether it were large or small or altogether non-existent—but he had his eye upon the fame that would be his when he went back to the yeomen of his township, upon the distinction that would be a legacy to his children, in virtue of his having looked upon and spoken to the Father of Confederation.

Sir John looked at him quizzingly a moment. "I'm looking for all we can get," he replied after a moment's pause; "can't have it too big, you know. Majorities are like what the squaw said about the whiskey," he went on, and he seemed to be trying to look over his left shoulder as he spoke; "when you've got a little too much, then that's just enough," joining, almost leading, in the laugh that followed.

A few minutes later, after a whispered consultation with a few of the faithful, the President took Sir John aside. "There's a little favour we thought of asking of you, Sir John—if we're not making too bold. We've been wondering if you could spare a few minutes to call upon one of the most loyal supporters you have in the country. It's the great disappointment of his life, I know, that he's not able to be out to-day—he met you when you were here before."

"The name?" asked the old Chieftain, inclining his ear.

"It's Dinny Riley—he used to be proprietor of this very establishment. But he pitched the business up—in a rather peculiar way. And now he's living in a little house about half a mile from here; we could drive over in a few minutes."

"What's the matter with him?" the Premier asked, the keen eyes thoughtful and earnest.

"Oh, he's pretty sick. Getting to be an old man, you know; been failing fast lately. And then, some time ago it seems he had a long drive in a fearful storm—and that proved serious. The doctor's fighting pneumonia—and we're rather afraid poor Dinny 'll never be out again. It would gladden his whole ——"

"I understand," Sir John interrupted quickly; "of

course I'll go. Certainly—we'll go right now; that kind of politics suits me exactly. I often think I should have been a minister—different from the Cabinet kind, I mean; a higher kind too, by Jove," the earnest look mingling strangely with the bantering smile that still played upon his lips—" if I had gone into the church, I'd have been Archbishop of Canterbury, possibly a Pope—if they'd have allowed me to 'lead about a sister,' as the Apostle says," giving the President a familiar nudge.

" And one of the two that are after the nomination to-day—I refer to Mr. Dustan—is engaged to Dinny Riley's daughter," the President went on, engrossed in his subject; " and the other one—I refer to Menzies—he *wanted* to be. At least, so they say."

This was enough for the great man, intensely human as he was. And the entire conversation, as he was being quickly driven to Dinny's house, centred itself about this so interesting love affair, grave matters of state laid aside for the time. Before the drive was finished, Sir John was familiar with the whole situation. " If these young fellows would pay more attention to their sweethearts, and less to politics, they'd be a good deal happier," was the veteran's dictum as they drew up to Dinny's humble door.

The interview was a great success. Dinny all but wept with joy—and Sir John's assurance that he

would have known him among a thousand left the adoring Irishman ready to depart in peace. The conversation lasted only a few minutes, but the farewell of the old Chieftain, though his words were few, had the breath of the Eternal in them. He, too, knew that on every life the night must fall.

Withdrawing, they met Nora at the door, returning from some errand up the street. Then did Sir John stop and pay his most chivalric court to the lovely girl, for there was no more appreciative judge of beauty in all the land. Nora's quiet dignity and modest deference evidently made a great impression on him.

"You'll be at the Convention this afternoon, of course?—they tell me the wives and sweethearts are all coming," he said, as he was about to bid her good-bye.

"Yes," said Nora, blushing. "I didn't intend to go—but father insists I must attend so that I can give him a full report of all that goes on." Her eyes were on the ground.

"I understand, my dear," the Premier returned slyly; "the old story—taking the children to see the animals, you know. Sure it's altogether for father's sake you want to go?" he went on teasingly. "My friend here," nodding towards the President, "tells me you hold one of the aspirants in the hollow of

your hand. Well, now, I'll tell you what I believe I'll do—for your sake; if he gets the nomination, and if he gives us good service down there in Parliament, I'll—I'll get him knighted—and half of it will go to you. Sir Arthur! that sounds pretty good, doesn't it now?—Tell me how it strikes you, my dear."

Even the Premier of the Dominion could not but feel the dignity, almost the rebuke, of the calm face uplifted to his own. It was furiously aflame, but something in the eyes told of complete self-control.

"You must excuse me, Sir John," she answered, with the daintiest courtesy, "if I don't answer your question. I'd like to give you all my confidence—but I don't feel I've known you long enough to burden you with it, Sir John," looking up in perfect calm.

The Premier laughed, but not quite so spontaneously as was his wont. "By Jove," he said, "you'd have made a great politician yourself; that's as good an answer as I ever heard on the floor of the House. If you were a man I'd make you Minister of Militia. Come, Mr. President, I guess it's time for us to go. Good-bye, my dear—and be sure to sit where I can see you this afternoon," as he went, still laughing, on his way.

A vast crowd thronged the hall when the Convention at length was called to order. The first and

great feature of the day was the speech from the eminent Canadian who had honoured the occasion with his presence. His words were received with breathless attention, especially towards the close, when his remarks were more purely of a personal note.

"I'm afraid, ladies and gentlemen," he went on in that semi-languid, semi-fiery style which thousands still remember well, "that my speech thus far, dealing largely with figures as it has, has been sadly dry and uninteresting. Statistics are hard to make entertaining. There was a man once, a publisher—he wasn't as familiar with pious things as he should have been; I'm afraid he was a Grit—and a certain Reverend author came to him and asked him if he would publish a work from his pen, a commentary on the book of Jeremiah. And the publisher said: 'Well, if there's lots of fun in it, I will—that's what takes with the public.' And I feel a good deal like that, my friends, while dealing with the facts and figures of the tariff—it's just about as hard to make them funny.

"But now I want to turn from all this, and indulge for a moment a more personal note. I want to thank you, as a constituency, for all your personal loyalty to myself—and to ask for more. You have stuck to me through thick and thin," the old Chief went on, leaning out towards his hearers, a very tender expression on the sensitive face, "and that's what I love

you for. I don't care much for friends who stand to your back when you're right—I want mine to stick to me when I'm wrong. And my opponents have tried hard enough, the Lord knows," a roguish look stealing to the expressive eyes, "to make you think I'm all wrong together—and to convince you that the country is going to the dogs in my hands. But that's because they're pessimists, ladies and gentlemen; they won't see the brightness and the prosperity all around them, which I think the party I have the honour to lead have done something to create. These croakers remind me of Marryat's English Sailor, who, returning from the sweet scenes of the Riviera to the storm and sleet of the English channel, pulled his sou'wester down over his head and buttoned his pea-jacket about his throat: 'This is weather,' quoth he, 'none of your blank blue skies for me.' Well, let the heathen rage," the Chieftain went on as soon as the roar of laughter had subsided, "let them rage, as another good man said long ago; they've abused and berated me, as you know, like a common pickpocket —but I'll give you the reason, ladies and gentlemen. There are many farmers here to-day—I can pick them out by the intelligence on their faces—and I want to ask you one thing; if you wanted to find the best apple tree in the orchard, where would you look? To a tree that nobody has disturbed, at which no

sticks and stones have been hurled? Oh, no! You look, do you not, for a tree that shows signs of battle —with the sticks and stones lying at its foot that have been hurled by envious hands. Well, my friends, it's just the same with men—when you have the tree that bears good fruit, you'll find it the target for all the missiles on which envy can lay its hands.

"And now, Mr. President, I must make way and let you proceed with the business of the hour. You are to nominate a candidate for the approaching election; and I rejoice to hear that, owing to the amiable discretion of our friends the enemy, whoever you nominate will stand unopposed, and becomes practically your next Member of Parliament. And I believe it is no secret that the choice practically lies between two men, most worthy both. All I have to say is this, that either one will suit me. As an old man said once when he went into the station at Buffalo—he had Scottish blood, like myself, I'm afraid—but anyhow, he went up to the wicket and said: 'Give me a ticket to Springfield.' 'Do you mean Springfield, Ohio, or Springfield, Massachusetts?' said the clerk. 'Well, which is the cheapest?' replied the Scotchman. Now I tell you that story, ladies and gentlemen, because it doesn't fit—just as we call the presiding officer of the House

the Speaker, because he doesn't speak—that story doesn't fit, because there are no cheap Conservatives. And I shall welcome whichever one you choose, and give him a fitting part to play in the upbuilding of our beloved country."

When the applause, which was as long as vociferous, had subsided, nominations were called for. And as was anticipated there were but two, all others retiring in favour of either Arthur Dustan or Irwin Menzies.

Then came the speeches from these two. Irwin's was brief but effective; and the Premier on the platform at his side was soon aware of the chief source of the speaker's inspiration. For ever and anon the eyes of Irwin Menzies turned in swift and earnest glances towards the gracious face and fragile figure of a woman four or five seats from the front of the hall. A warm and tender smile came over the face of the statesman when, after keen observation for a moment or two, the marked resemblance told him that the flushed and radiant face was that of the young man's mother; and many eyes besides that searching pair of his were turned on the sensitive and responsive features, pride stamped on every lineament.

Next came Mr. Arthur Dustan. The applause that greeted him seemed about equal to that which

had cheered the previous speaker—and the excitement, with the deepening uncertainty, became intense. Midway in his address Irwin had occasion to interrupt his opponent; a sharp altercation followed, the issue decidedly favourable to Irwin. This provoked a hot thrust from Dustan, well-parried by his antagonist. Whereupon, in a sudden gust of passion, angered by the jeering laughter from a large section of his audience, he suddenly appealed to the throng with rash and bitter words.

"And anyhow, ladies and gentlemen," he burst out, trembling with anger, "there's another side to all this matter—and it's time for plain speaking. Which of us two, from every personal standpoint—which of us two has the better right to represent this county in the Dominion Parliament? I was born among you—he abroad. I, or those who bear my name, have given employment to hundreds right here in Glen Ridge—he has had all he could do to support himself. My father has been one of the most useful citizens of all this region—my opponent *does not know who his father is*," the words coming out with a splenetic rush that was almost like a hiss, and he turned, his head thrust far forward towards Irwin, and poured upon him the contempt of a haughty and maddened face. "And if you prefer, ladies and ——"

But he got no further. With one bound Irwin towered at his side, his face terrible to behold in its dark and lowering wrath. The President sat petrified; as for the old Chieftain, he was pale as the wall behind him. Mighty, looking twice his size, Irwin stood beside his antagonist, the latter's face still upturned in malignant scorn; Irwin's arm was uplifted, and had all but fallen—when, suddenly, seizing himself in the clutches of a mighty will, and appearing to shake himself like one awaking from a troubled sleep, he stepped back. Resolutely, yet as if reluctantly, his eyes still fixed greedily on the man before him, one step at a time, fighting his backward way, wrestling with himself like one who struggles not against flesh and blood, his pale lips working spasmodically, his clinched hands held rigidly by his side, he slowly worked his way back, back, further from the vortex that had so nearly engulfed him.

He reached his chair, sat down on it for a moment, his form quivering as he buried his face in his hands. Presently that face emerged—but with what a transformation! The flame of passion had died out from it as the colour fades from the hectic sky. In its place there sat an ineffable sadness, tenderly brooding, troubled and distraught, as though he had heard the cry of one in pain. Evidently Dustan was forgotten, more than forgotten now; for, turning in

his chair, Irwin's eyes roved to the sea of faces before him, searching, wistfully searching, as one might peer for some beloved face above a waste of waters. His eyes leaped to where she sat; erect no longer now, but bowed and trembling in a gust of agony, he beheld the familiar form. Whereat he rose, like one in a dream, and pressed towards the stair at the side of the platform. On his way to it he passed Dustan by; the latter turned quickly, assuming an attitude of defense—but Irwin saw him not. Nor did he pause till he reached his mother's side. And there he stood a moment, then turned, sweeping the multitude before him with a look of such majesty as they had never seen before; pride, and high scorn of shame, and defiance of all who would impugn his name; and love, tender and strong and true, for the crushed and broken woman bowed before him—all these looked out from the glowing face whose stern strong eyes lit it up as though it were a banner flung to the morning sun.

Then he bended low. He spoke no word—at least not at first—but slowly, with unspeakable strength and tenderness, reverence evident in every move, he touched the thin shoulders with both his hands, the grasp gently spreading till he had—all unconscious of the crowd about him, and as indifferent as unconscious—taken her into the loving shelter of

his arms. Gently he stroked the whitening locks of hair; once or twice he patted her, as though she were a child wounded and in pain. Then he softly whispered a word or two; the bowed head moved in answer—and without further word or sound he gently helped her to her feet, bearing her outward with him to the aisle, for he knew her strength was gone. With courtly grace, like some cavalier before his queen, he took her arm within his own; she clung to him, leaning heavily, her gaze never lifted from the floor. And thus they went down the passageway together. Her sad eyes were downcast, as has been said—but his head was borne aloft that all might see the look of love and pride upon it. With what dignity, accommodating his strong step to her feeble pace, he walked down the aisle beside her! Like a very king he walked—and once or twice, not knowing what he did, he turned to look down upon his mother in a fullness of loyalty and devotion that was beautiful to behold, murmuring some word that no other ear could hear.

It was some rustic, no doubt untutored and uncouth, yet secretly taught of heaven, who was first inspired to rise in homage. For to his feet, scarce knowing why, one such rude swain did suddenly rise—and in a moment, moved by a common impulse, every one of the great throng was standing in

silent deference as the mother and son passed down among them and departed noiselessly at the door.

They were still standing, and with tears on many a bronzed and weathered cheek, when, his whole frame astorm with the emotion that possessed him, the Prime Minister, his pale face wrung with the feeling he could not control, almost leaped to the front of the platform.

"Three cheers for Mr. Menzies!" he shouted, the words ablaze as they came in that voice that knew the mastery of assemblies; "three cheers—three royal cheers, I say!" his long arm aloft as he led the mighty outcry.

They came—and more than three—echoing long and loud. And the ocean of sound, like the Atlantic in a storm, outflung its billows far till they engulfed in gladness the two receding forms that had left the throng behind. Margaret Menzies turned a moment, looking her gratitude towards the echoing hall; but her son cast no glance behind.

Then the vote was taken—and Irwin Menzies' triumph was complete.

XXVI

SIR JOHN A.'S HANDIWORK

THE excited multitude filed slowly from the hall. One of the first to depart—and all alone—was Arthur Dustan. The ghost of a dead hope looked from his eyes. Yet those same eyes brightened as they fell a moment later on what was evidently the object of his search—for he knew the road she would likely choose. Well had it been for him could he have read the portentous tidings that were stamped on Nora Riley's face as she hurried swiftly homeward by a deserted street. But his was not the seeing eye, nor his the discerning heart.

Wherefore his manner was jaunty as of yore when a few hurried steps brought him up with her. "Well, he's got his nomination, curse him," were his opening words—"but he hasn't got what he wants the most," turning on Nora a glance as tender as the spirit of the hour would permit. "I wouldn't trade him yet—he'd give his M. P., and his head along with it, for something ten times as sweet—something that's mine," compelling a smile as proud and gracious as was within his power.

But with the next glance the words he was about to utter froze upon his lips. For never before had he seen a face more eloquent of scorn and contempt, almost of loathing. The girl stopped, speaking not a word. But her eyes were fixed on his with such a glance as permitted of no misunderstanding. They flashed their message; clearer than any words could have told him they spoke the verdict of her heart. Her form was drawn to its full height, so that it seemed to tower above him where he stood. Still she gazed, the burning eyes still pouring out the tumult of her soul. His gaze answered to her own for a few brief moments; then, although his eyes were now cast down, he tried further speech.

"What's this all about, Nora?" he began embarrassedly; "this is something new—surely you don't mean ——"

"Stop!" she cried, like one in pain. "Go away. Go away—I hate you," and with a feeble cry, all her dignity departed now, she turned the other way and broke into a little run, as though she were fleeing from some dread thing of the forest.

He followed a step or two; but the air about him was still vibrant with the cry, its deadly reality not to be mistaken. Stopping and standing still, he gazed a moment after the retreating figure, then

turned an adjoining corner and walked swiftly homeward.

Meantime, another was interested in something far more thrilling than the mere selection of a man to fill a seat in a distant House of Parliament. And that other was Sir John, the First Minister of the Queen in the fairest of her Possessions beyond the Seas.

"Bring me that man Menzies," he said to one of the faithful before the gathering was well dispersed —and his tone showed that he wished to be obeyed at once; "he belongs to me now, you know. Get him before he starts out to the country—he's a farmer, I believe. And fetch him to The Buck Tavern—I've got to see him."

Thither Sir John repaired at once, to wait for his newly elected henchman. Irwin was soon discovered; the news of his victory left his mother in a state of bliss before which even so bitter a sorrow as her own was forced to yield; and kind hearts cared for her until her son should return after he had answered the summons of his Leader.

"Sit down here, my boy," said the Statesman as Irwin entered the little room that had been secured for the interview. "I want to speak to you. And first, let me congratulate you—that was a magnificent impulse of yours this afternoon. It was

beautiful, my boy—I don't know when this old heart of mine was so full as you made it to-day," and there was a tremor in the voice of the master as he came over to the younger man; very gently his arm crept over the shoulder of his follower, and if Irwin's head had not been bent so low he would have seen the mist in the wonderful eyes; "it was like the fourteenth of St. John, boy, for tenderness—and I know the good Lord will make it all up to you, nobody else can. Yes, it was beautiful," he went on almost to himself; "I never saw as much strength, and as much gentleness, both together—I don't think I ever did. And I want to send something to that mother of yours, my lad," his hand going to the breast pocket of his coat as he spoke. "Here's a picture of 'the Old Man,' as they call me; it's as handsome as an inscrutable Providence would permit—no more and no less—but it's a picture of the Old Man, anyhow, such as he is. Here, I'll just autograph it now," taking from the table a pen which had been put there for his use: "'To an unknown friend—from one who honours her;' and there's my signature," he concluded with a flourish of the pen.

"Now, I'll tell you something—I had this in my pocket to give to the head heeler here when I should bid him good-bye; often do that for the

local man that kind of leads the party—always, if they haven't children; if there's a baby, I kiss it, of course," making a wry face towards Irwin as he mentioned the process; "if not, I generally give them a photo. But the Great Mogul here will just have to go without any this time; serves him right, anyhow—it'll teach him to get married and have babies to fill up the Tory ranks with. So I want you to give this picture to your mother—and my love goes with it—and tell her I hope to meet her where I'll have time to cultivate my friends. The first three million years I'm in heaven, do you know what I'm going to do, Menzies?—I'm going to sit by the golden river and listen to its music, and never make a speech or kiss a baby or see a deputation or tinker with a tariff—just rest and visit for the first three million years," a plaintive look of yearning actually mingling with the drollery on the mercurial face.

Irwin took the photograph, gazed at it a moment, then began such expression of gratitude as he best could. But his leader stopped him.

"Tut! tut! none of that," he interrupted, "the boot's on the other foot—and anyhow, Menzies, that isn't what I wanted to see you about; not principally, at least. I wanted to ask you to do something for me—that is, for the party."

Irwin started, straightening himself up; his face showed his eagerness to serve.

"I'm your leader now, you know?" the withered face lighting up with a peculiar smile.

Irwin's assent was swift, if silent.

"And what I'm going to ask is partly in the form of an order; a request, at least—for party purposes. Will you do as I request you?"

"You know I will, Sir John," and the glowing countenance told how heartfelt were the words.

"Well, I'll tell you what it is. There's a member of our party here—right here in Glen Ridge—that's always been solid for us, so far as I know. But I was talking to that same individual to-day. And I'm afraid some words of mine may have given just the least little bit of offense—nothing serious, you know, but still I'm nervous about it—and that's why I want your help, my boy. We can't afford to lose any of our friends, you know."

"I understand, Sir John," Irwin broke in cordially; "I understand you perfectly—you want me to see this man and make everything all right with him?"

"Wait a minute," the chief returned, and even here his imperiousness could be felt, "and I'll tell you what I want you to do. I want your promise that you will see this individual, this very day; and

that you will get a promise to stand by my lieutenant —I mean you, Menzies—in any way that will contribute to his success and happiness. Will you promise me that?" the keen eyes searching the face of the younger man as he waited for the reply.

Irwin's answer came with impetuous haste. "Promise you! I should think I would, Sir John—I do promise you; and I'll fulfill it this very day."

The Chieftain held out his hand. "Put it there, my boy," he said, the eloquent lips twitching a little as was their wont under deep emotion.

Irwin seized the proffered hand. "What's the man's name, Sir John?" he asked, impatient to fulfill his promise.

"Nora Riley!" and the Premier's face was a study as he leaned far forward towards the startled youth. "And it's a name that ought to be set to music—it's a poem, sir."

Irwin started back. Silent a moment, he then broke out in a storm of protest, and inquiry, and explanation. "You don't know, Sir John," he repeated more than once as he hurried on, "or else you wouldn't ask me—you don't know all the circumstances, or else ——"

But now Sir John was moving towards the door. "I've got to go," he said, smiling exasperatingly; "I have to leave this burgh in half an hour. But

I'll tell you one thing, young man—I wasn't born yesterday. And another thing—I know more than you think for. And still another thing—I'm nobody's fool—if you don't believe me, ask the Grits. They know, my son," chuckling to himself as he put his hand out to the door.

But Irwin, forgetful of Premiership and all things beside, threw himself against it and held it fast. "One word, Sir John," he cried eagerly, his face flushed and hot; "do you *mean* that—do you really mean you *know?*"

Sir John turned and looked at him; more significant look never came from human eyes. "Yes, my boy," he began slowly after a lengthy pause, "I really mean it. I do know—know everything. I know you think you've won a great victory in that fight to-day—and I know you think you're happy. But, my boy, your real fight's only beginning. You've captured the outworks—now take the citadel. You've only got the casket—win your jewel; then you'll know what real happiness is. Yes, I know, my boy, I know."

"Did you ever *see* her, Sir John?" Irwin stammered wildly.

The Premier smiled indulgently. "Yes, I saw her—talked to her; wanted like the deuce to kiss her too—only they say I'm a pretty good judge of hu-

man nature, and that's the only reason I didn't. If she were twins—and I were forty years younger—you and I'd be brothers-in-law, Menzies. Well, I've got to go, my boy."

"You *talked* to her, Sir John—and you still hold me to my promise?" came from the half-intoxicated youth beside him, his lips parted, his brow already wet.

"Yes, my boy, I do—I hold you to your promise. And it's to be fulfilled to-day, you know. They call me 'Old To-morrow'—perhaps I am, but I'll have to try and bring the boys up differently. God bless you, Menzies—and her too—I'm going now. You stay here and get down on your marrows beside that bed and thank heaven for sending me your way. Good-bye," and the old Chief closed the door behind him and hurried down the stairs.

A moment later he was entering his carriage. "Drive me to Riley's," he directed—"where you took me this morning."

Nora was in the tiny sitting-room when the Premier was shown in. If her greeting was free from agitation it yet evinced the surprise and wonder she could not help but feel. As before, her bearing was deferential and dignified; but now she felt the warm outgoing of her heart to this remarkable man as she had seldom felt it before towards mortal. She had

been overswept that day by the splendour of his impulse, the noble tide of his emotion when he had led the great throng in the expression of their highest feeling—and she had seen his great soul in flames, as through heavenly gates ajar.

"Keep your seat, madam," said Sir John, bowing with a grace that would have befitted palace halls; "I only dropped in to say good-bye. I have but a moment. Were you at the meeting this afternoon, my child?" he inquired, his tone taking on the fatherly note again.

"Yes, Sir John," she answered simply; "yes, I was there."

Sir John studied her a moment. "I'm afraid I'll have to confess that I was glad things went the way they did to-day," he went on, his face as serious as his words save for that slight and uncontrollable twitch about the corners of the mobile mouth, "but I wanted to tell you that I sympathize with you just the same—I know how disappointed you must have been, my child. But life is full of just such disappointments," the telltale corners more uncontrollable than ever—"and anyhow, I'm sure it's all for the best; you will have your Arthur all to yourself now, you know," the twinkle returning to the roguish eye.

Nora cast a quick and searching look at the old Chief above her. "Pardon my saying so, Sir John,"

the girl answered evasively, "but I fear you are not an authority on the subject of disappointments. Your life has been one long success—your tide has been always at the full," she rather stammered out, amazed at the boldness of her speech.

The old man looked at her long in silence. That sensitive mouth spoke again, without the aid of words—and the grave eyes were dewy soft. "That's what the world says," he began, a little catch in the words, "but that's all they know about it. I know what it is to pass through great sorrow, my child—possibly you've heard of mine, probably not—it has cast its shadow through the years. I don't often speak of it—but the worst wounds are those that bleed beneath the armour; and when I do, it is only to those I trust—and love," the girl's crimson face going down before the words. "But I often think a wise God permitted it to happen me, just to teach me what success really is. Do you think I call all *this* success?" he went on tensely, waving his hand towards the outer world, "all this fuss and feathers, this brass band business, this 'Hurrah boys'? It's all moonshine," he declared contemptuously; "and all the rest of it too, wealth, fame, or all the pleasures that they bring. These are only life's scaffolding, my child, nothing but scaffolding —the real *structure* of life is love; that's where we

succeed or fail, Nora—you will let me call you that —if we succeed there, it's all success, but if we fail there it's all failure.

"Ah, Nora, the old man isn't past all this tender business yet; and I still know all the symptoms—of heart affection—just as well as I did forty years ago. But all I can do is to give you my apostolic blessing, and wish you the brand of happiness that only love can bring; *then* you will have a successful life, my child—but there's no other way, there's no other royal path to rapture," making as if to depart with the closing words.

Suddenly he paused, returning to where she sat bowed before him. "You'll always be my friend, Nora, won't you?" he said gently; "I haven't so very many—not of the *inward* kind, at least."

Nora looked up gratefully. "You know, Sir John," she faltered.

"And you'll stick to our side?" he went on, the mirthful note in his voice again; "you'll stand by the old Man, the old Flag, the old Policy, won't you, Nora?"

She looked up again, the light of laughter flashing through the tears.

"I knew it," he said. "Well, there's one thing I want you to do for the party. I've asked one of the faithful to call on you to-day—and explain just how

you can help—and I want you to promise you'll receive him kindly, and do what you can for him. This is all for my sake, of course," he added banteringly, the half-merry, half-serious eyes never lifted from her face.

Her head bowed lower; the tide of hot emotion mantled neck and cheek and brow; the wonderful eyes were turned aside. He pressed his request no further. "Good-bye," he said, the words all tenderness now; "good-bye, my child, and God bless you—and him. You won't deny the old man this little favour—it has no campaign value," the smile flitting to his lips, then away, as he gently raised the crimson face upward to his own. "Good-bye—till we meet again," with which he turned and walked slowly from the room.

The voices of the night were beginning to be heard around the lowly cottage as Nora sat, subdued and silent, and struggling with a wildly insurgent heart, beside her father's bed.

They both heard the knock when at last it sounded on the door. But it was Dinny who frankly avowed there was some one rapping—it was Nora who protested there could be no one there.

"Why, it's Irwin," she suddenly declared, after a swift glance from the window. She had barely seen

the shadowy form in the gathering gloom—but if Fate himself had stood knocking at the door she could not have trembled more. "I'll bring him up," she said, setting her white lips close together.

"Nary a bit av it, my darlint," the sick man protested, looking away from Nora. "I don't feel like seein' annybody to-night. Close the door, girl," he directed as she was about to leave him, "an' mebbe I'll get a bit o' sleep while ye're away." Then, as soon as the door was closed, he winked shamelessly towards the dim image of himself in a mirror opposite the bed.

Nora admitted the silent visitor, struggling hard to summon the surprise she knew she ought to feel. His face was whiter than her own—but neither could see well, so friendly was the dark.

"Please don't," Irwin said faintly, as she searched for a match from the mantel of the little sitting-room. "I won't be a minute—and it isn't necessary. I came, I was sent, I came, to ask a favour. I promised Sir John—and I wanted to—and it's this; do please sit down," for he himself in his agitation was at the farmost corner of the room. "Oh, Nora," the voice breaking and rippling like some passionate stream that frets its way through cleft and channel; "oh, Nora, we want your help—he wants you to do what you can for me—that is, Nora, there's only one

thing you can do—oh, Nora, I love you so, and I cannot live without you! And I want you, my darling—oh, my darling, nobody sent me here but my own lonely heart—I love you—have always loved you; and I want you, Nora, for my own, my very own, now, always, forever," his voice gathering strength as he slowly moved across the room, his arms outstretched, nearer, ever nearer to where she stood beside the door, the willowy form trembling like a reed of the wilderness when smitten by some wind from afar. "I'm coming, Nora," he spoke low amid the darkness; "oh, my darling, I'm coming—to you—to take you, and hold you in my arms, tight, in the shelter of their love, my darling, the love that is all for you. Let me come, my own—and you will come to me—and we will part no more forever!"

Thus, thus at last! Together, they two, for both of whom Life had been so maimed, to whom Fate had seemed so cruel; the one enshadowed by that dark cloud, which, frowning at his birth, the brightest day of life can hardly dissipate—the other, by associations and surroundings such as blight and mar and separate. Yet in that hour all these were but as the dust. Perhaps—who knows?—some thought of this coursed through their thrilled and raptured hearts as life found its crown, life's problem its solution, at long last and forever. Together, each the

other's, never to be poor, never to be despised again; independent of everything but God, riched and enriching in the mystery of mutual love.

It was quite dark before Nora spoke. Even then she only whispered, low and faint. "My king!" were the words she said—and love's anointing touch laid reverent seal upon the lips that spoke them.

XXVII

"AND THE SHADOWS FLEE AWAY"

ROBERT GRAYSON was as much friend as lawyer to half Glen Ridge; and, so far as Dinny was concerned, he had been far more the former than the latter. Wherefore, though long past his appointed office hours, he lost no time in answering the summons from the house of death.

He went in alone, moving quickly with outstretched hand towards the bed where Dinny lay. There was quite a pathetic catch in his voice as he asked his old friend how he fared—for, alas, it needed but a glance to know.

"Close that there door," Dinny requested faintly; "shut it tight—I don't want annybody near hand us now—an' sit down forninst me. I want to fix up my will."

"Fix it up, Dinny?" echoed the lawyer, his eyebrows lifted; "it's all fixed, man."

"I want to put one o' them there finishin' touches on; I forget what ye call 'em—the word begins wid the name av a fish, I mind."

Mr. Grayson smiled. "You mean a codicil, don't

you, Dinny? All right; I understand—you have your will here, in the house, haven't you?"

"It's in that there chist," Dinny's weak voice responded, "along wid Nora's christenin' robe—it's wrapped up in it."

"What do you want to add to your will, Dinny?" the lawyer asked, leaning over, paper and pencil in hand. "I'll just make a memo here—then I'll have it filled out in proper form at the office and added to the will; you can sign it to-morrow."

Dinny smiled plaintively. "Ye'll do it to-night," he answered resolutely; "I won't be here to-morrow. It's a long journey I'm goin' on, mind ye—an' I won't be back for a while," the old whimsical expression on his face again; "for they say it's lovely where I'm goin' to—I hope," his eyes turned in wistful wonder towards the window, and Beyond. "So ye'll just go ahead wid the repairs now, if ye please, sir."

The lawyer, sympathetic, made a stifled protest, turning a moment later to the matter in hand. "Well, what is it, Dinny?" he said.

"The will's all right—ye're sure o' that?" and Dinny nodded towards the oaken chest in the corner.

"All right—perfectly in order every way—you may rest easy about that."

"An' it all—ivery red cent, ivery penny I—I in-

herited, like—it all goes to Irwin? I niver took a farthin' av it for myself, mind ye," the slightest glow of pride on the pallid face.

"Every dollar of it," the lawyer replied tersely—"he inherits every dollar."

"Well," Dinny went on earnestly, "there's just wan request, like, I want to make about it—an' that's what I want this here codfish thing to do."

"Yes, Dinny," the lawyer smiling faintly.

"I want Irwin—if he's willin', an' I know he'll be glad—to buy The Buck Tavern; that's where Nora come, sir, when she was a wee fairy av a girl, an' that was purty near all the home she ever had, poor darlint," the words broken and trembling as they came—"she didn't have anny mother. An' that's where I done my life-work, I'm afeard. An' I want Irwin to buy it—an' it's always to be called The Buck Tavern—an' it's got to *be* a tavern, too. Only widout a bar—there isn't to be anny bar. Got that writ down, sir?" as he paused for breath.

"Yes, Dinny—to be no bar. Anything else?"

"Yes, lots. It's got to be run dacent like, for the use av the public. An', 'specially, Mr. Grayson," the words coming slowly and emphatically, "'specially in aid av the poor bums, an' toughs, an' drunks, that's down an' out—in regards to whiskey, like. They're to be the guests av honour—an' to be took in cheer-

ful anny hour, night or day; an' washed, an' fed, an'—an' comforted, like; 'specially when they haven't anny money—an' got kicked out av somewheres else. Mebbe it'll cost a lot," the pale lips added reflectively—"but there'll be plinty left, yes, there'll be plinty left. Might that there be writ down all right, Mr. Grayson?" he asked anxiously as he sank back exhausted on his pillow.

It was duly finished, signed, witnessed by two men summoned by the lawyer from an adjoining house—and Mr. Grayson took his last farewell, hurrying from the room as he struggled to conceal his sorrow for the loss of one he truly loved.

It was three or four hours later; and the death struggle had deepened towards its close. Patiently, majestically, with many a loving look and many a tender word for those about him, Dinny gave battle to his last great Enemy. Dr. Leitch was there; Irwin too, and Margaret Menzies, her spiritual face lending its holy calm—but none other, save his daughter alone. For when the lowly set sail on unknown seas there are few to wish them Godspeed on their great Adventure.

Yet there were enough; and the eyes of the dying man were filled with deep content as they roved,

ever and anon, from one to another of the faces he loved so well. Suddenly he beckoned Irwin to his side.

"I'm awful happy," he faltered: "I know ye'll be good to Nora—she hadn't anny mother."

Irwin's tears fell fast on the white pillow beneath him.

"An' I told ye—I told ye yesterday—about my will; in regards to all that there money that was left me—by a frind av me own—from the old country, like. I was always poor myself—but I had some terrible rich frinds. I niver told ye annythin' about it when I was well—but I kep' it all for yez, just the same—an' ye'll have it all. An' if ye buy The Buck Tavern—ye'll ken all about it soon," checking the word of surprise on Irwin's lips—"ye're always to keep the light in the windy an' the fire in the hearth, like. But ye'll find out all about it soon—an' I know ye'll do it right. Sure it'll be a grand place for the bhoys. I—I think I'll go to sleep a little now," he added drowsily; "an' I'm awful happy; I know ye'll be good to Nora. An' I want yer mother to take care av yez both," the wistful eyes turning to Margaret Menzies. Then he seemed to fall into a gentle slumber as the tender eyes closed softly.

It was only a few minutes till he was wide awake again, still battling against death. Dr. Leitch was

standing above the bed. Earnestly, lovingly, he spoke of the Life Everlasting; of the Lover of the Soul; of the Saviour, Redeemer, Guide. Dinny listened eagerly, sometimes with unopened eyes. All at once he looked up, the last great light in them.

"It's purty near closin' time," he began quietly; "I always knew when it was near hand the time for closin' up—an' it won't be long. D' ye think they'll let me in where I'm goin', Doctor?" fixing his look wistfully on his friend.

"The gates of it shall not be shut at all, Dinny," Dr. Leitch replied gently, his beautiful face aglow. "Yes, your Saviour will let you in, Dinny."

"He got that other feller in—that there burglar," Dinny returned simply, "an' I ain't anny worse'n him. I'm bad enough," the faint words spoken as if to himself, "but I didn't have much av a chance, someways, ever since I was a little boy—I was handicapped purty bad, some ways—but I always done the best I could. An' there's wan thing comforts me an awful lot, Doctor, now when I'm lyin' here."

"And what is that?" Dr. Leitch asked tenderly, bending down to catch the feeble accents.

"It's this—I always sold it pure; niver anny pizen—niver anny watter in it," and the satisfaction on Dinny's face was deep and real. "I emp'ied out a keg in the back yard wanst or twiced—'cause it wasn't

good; it was kind av hard at the time, but it's an awful comfort now when I'm goin' before my God," and the dying eyes seemed to look far out, along that awesome path his feet were soon to tread. "An' when a man had enough, I niver gave him anny more—don't ye think that'll help some, Doctor?" as the appealing face was turned upward to his friend.

But before the minister had time to make reply, the dying man went on. "Not that I'm trustin' to that—I'm trustin' to Him, Doctor. Ye see," gasping a little as his breath came short, "my business kind o' taught me that, Doctor. I seen it lots o' times, annyway, at other taverns; I seen as how it needs some one to help us home! Lots o' times I've seen a man—just a man—take some poor feller by the arm, nice an' gentle, too, an' help him home. Well, Doctor, if *a man* does that—just a man—sure He can't do anny less, can He, Doctor?"

The old minister's swimming eyes looked down; the quivering lips tried in vain to speak.

"It's Him that does it first, ain't it, Doctor?" the pleading eyes still upturned.

The minister nodded, speaking no word.

"Well, that's what I'm trustin' to," Dinny added, nodding his head feebly, the words full of childlike confidence. "I know He'll look after me—at closin' time—an' take me Home. An' I know He'll forgive

me too; I've forgiven a heap o' fellers in my day myself—I forgave Jock Taylor—me, that's all bad; an' I know it must come handier to the likes av Him than the likes av me—so I ain't afeard," the words murmuring themselves away into silence.

"That's what He lives for, Dinny—what He died for—and He loves you, He loves you, Dinny," cried the aged minister, leaning over with streaming eyes, the words coming in broken falterings.

Dinny scarcely seemed to hear. He lay in silence, his eyes tightly closed. A little later some sound came from the parted lips. Nora, breathless, bended low to catch the words.

> "Nothin' in my hand I bring,
> Simply to Thy Cross I cling,"

was indistinctly murmured.

"Did you speak, father?" she asked awesomely.

"I was preparin' to meet my God—don't annybody speak to me," he said, the gaze outgoing far beyond.

Silent, hushed in the presence of Death, the watchers stood above him. Once again his eyes were closed, once again deep silence reigned. But at length the shut eyes once more opened wide—and now they were fixed on the Invisible. A look of unspeakable tenderness was on his face, the lips quiver-

ing with emotion, the whole countenance suffused with a transport not to be described.

"I'm comin', Kitty," he suddenly cried, the voice rising with strange eagerness, upborne with joy; "oh, mother, I'm comin'—an' Nora's here, right here wid me, mother. An' I done the best I could for our little girl. I tried to be father an' mother to her ever since you went away—an' now Irwin'll keep her, till she comes. But I'm comin' now, mother, I'm ——"

The words died upon his lips; but the Joy, the Rapture, the Victory, still rested in light upon the face, now forever still in the fixity of death. The day, the long hard day, was done; yet there was no hint of dark, no shade of evening there; the humble pilgrim had passed on through the portals of the Morning, on to the City of God.

THE END